A Mortuary Analysis of the Structure 7 Cemetery at Town Creek, a Mississippian Site in the Piedmont of North Carolina

by

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Town Creek is a prehistoric Native American site in central North Carolina. The Mississippian period occupation, from about A.D. 1150-1350, saw the most intensive use of the site. The community transformed from a residential village during the first half of the occupation to a necropolis later on. The cemeteries were created within the original public and domestic structures, the largest of which is Structure 7, the focus of this thesis. According to historic accounts of Southeastern Indian groups, communities were comprised of ranked clans made up of multiple kin groups that maintained separate household spaces. Through visual analysis and the spatial analysis of the distribution of burial attributes that include burial depth, age, sex, grave goods, body positioning and body orientation, I identify five spatially discrete groups within the Structure 7 cemetery. I argue that these five groups represent smaller social groups within the clan. The first group is a Central Square cluster that includes key members from the smaller social groups in the cemetery. There burials were arranged in a square, a formation repeated throughout Southeastern Indian ideology and site architecture. A small, Central cluster enclosed by the Central Square cluster, is consistent with ritual activity, as the interred are all children without any grave goods or other distinguishing attributes. A cluster in the northern part of the cemetery is made up entirely of adult males and children. This Northern cluster is interpreted as a politically-based grouping, as adult males most often held positions of political

power in historic native groups. The children interred are likely kin or youth in line for positions of significant social status. Alternatively, they could represent ritual offerings associated with the interments of the adult males. Adult males, adult females, and children were found in the Southeastern and Southwestern clusters, which led to their interpretation as kin groups. Each of these groups was distinguishable through the distribution of specific artifact types and body positioning. The presence of all five of these groups contributed to the 50 person burial population in Structure 7, making it the largest cemetery at Town Creek. Its large size indicates that those interred in the Structure 7 cemetery were part of the largest and /or longest lasting group in the Town Creek community. Should other clans at Town Creek have had similar organization, the burial attribute patterning identified through this analysis may assist in the interpretation of other cemeteries at the site.

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by

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they have always been just a phone away. My mother has been especially encouraging and kind, and I am grateful for her willingness to listen, she really is the best.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Studies of prehistoric Mississippian societies are a mainstay for archaeological scholarship in the Southeast. My thesis will add to this body of work with a specific focus on mortuary contexts and the analysis of spatial patterning. Current literature has emphasized the importance of social group dynamics in the creation of Mississippian archaeological sites. In concentrating on a specific cemetery at the Town Creek site, I examine physical and cultural burial attributes to distinguish such social groups, and offer my interpretations as to their nature and social significance.

Research Significance and Project Objectives

Studies of Mississippian culture are one of the hallmarks of archaeological research in the United States. Although many previously conducted examinations of prehistoric complex societies have sought to identify social stratification, newer perspectives look to recognize differences in representation of the individual and social personae (Blitz 2010:14-16; Marcoux 2010:147-148; Pauketat 2010:16-18). One of the best means to identify and study these aspects is through the analysis of archaeological mortuary contexts. The Town Creek site has been excavated and interpreted for over 50 years. Much of the completed research has addressed the nature of the community's development and of the social structures in place during the time of the Mississippian occupation. In order to better understand the social dynamics of those living at Town Creek, recent researchers have begun to analyze the mortuary remains at the site. The mortuary remains at Town Creek have been previously analyzed by Driscoll in her 2001 doctoral dissertation, Boudreaux in his 2005 doctoral dissertation, and in his 2010 chapter in *Mississippian Mortuary Practices*, "Mound Construction and Community Changes within the

Mississippian Town at Town Creek." Driscoll (2001) examined demographic and bioarchaeological data as spatially determined indicators of social status. Boudreaux's (2005) dissertation took a broad approach to the previously collected mortuary data, and analyzed artifact and demographic variables in relation to the community's social and political development. His later work focused on the site's functional shift from a town to a cemetery complex. The general chronology developed by Boudreaux (2010) correlates age, sex, and artifact patterning with shifts in architectural style and mound construction.

While these previous works have led to general interpretations about the Town Creek community's social structure and development through the lens of mortuary analysis, no research has attempted to examine the spatial patterning and related burial attribute data within individual cemeteries. The work presented here focuses on the cemetery in Structure 7, an enclosed circular structure that contains the highest burial population of all of the cemeteries at Town Creek. In this thesis, I endeavor to decipher the cultural significance of the cemetery through the examination of its burial patterning. In so doing, I will distinguish culturally constructed groupings of individuals through the analysis of several lines of burial attribute data. Chapter 2 presents background information in regard to Mississippian culture and the Town Creek site in particular. Chapter 3 outlines the reasoning behind the methods chosen for this analysis, and describes the attribute data considered. The data and results will be presented in Chapter 4, followed by a discussion of my interpretations of the analysis in Chapter 5. Opportunities for further research and an assessment of the feasibility of my findings as a model for other cemeteries at Town Creek will conclude this thesis in Chapter 6.

Chapter 2: Background

This chapter begins with an introduction to Mississippian studies, and outlines how theoretical perspectives have affected interpretations from the past to the present. A brief discussion of Mississippian burial contexts through the description of similar analyses contextualizes my research. Following the presentation of this background information, the Town Creek site is introduced, and its mortuary component is described.

Mississippian Culture

Many people inhabiting the Midwestern and Southeastern regions of the United States from A.D. 900 until the time of European Contact were known as Mississippian. What is known about the culture of these people has been gathered through historical accounts as well as through archaeological interpretation. These socially complex, chiefdom-level societies are known for their elaborate artifacts, shared symbolism and motifs, ceremonial practices, and mortuary behaviors (Hally and Mainfort 2004:273-274; Steponaitis 1986:387-388; Sullivan and Mainfort 2010b:1). Mississippian subsistence was based on farmed crops that included maize, beans, and squash (Anderson and Sassaman 2012:160; Steponaitis 1986:388). Individuals and social groups in Mississippian societies are believed to have occupied ranked social statuses, as indicated especially by differences in burial treatment (Goldstein 1980:13-14; Hally and Mainfort 2004:282).

Mississippian sites generally exhibit long occupations and typically include a central plaza, domestic and public structures, earthen mounds, and mortuary areas (Blitz 2010:7; King 2001:10; Lewis et al. 1998). Many past analyses of Mississippian culture focus on the

development of organization and centralized authorities, and the nature of social stratification and rank structures within these societies (Anderson and Sassaman 2012:153; Brown 1981; Knight 1990; Lewis 1996:156; Peebles and Kus 1977:421). These themes were likely inspired by the historic French colonial accounts of the Natchez and Taensa groups from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which describe centralized political structures and settlement organization. The accounts refer specifically to the connection between the mounds' ceremonial significance and the rise of political authority figures. Social organization is also depicted as matrilineal (Hally 2008:8). Spanish accounts from the same period describe political authority and warfare, but do not elaborate on social organization or power structures (Knight 1990:1-2). The detailed eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century ethnohistoric accounts of native groups in the Southeast such as the Natchez, Creek, and Cherokee have been especially influential in their documentation of hierarchical organization, cosmology, and public and domestic architecture in the region (Cushman 1962[1899]; Hally 2008:8-10; Knight 1990:17-20; Swanton 1931, 1979). The interpretive value of these accounts continues to be useful, and they will serve as the basis for many interpretations in this analysis.

Over the past several decades, the designation "Mississippian" has undergone several phases of redefinition. It has referred to artifact traditions, cultural groups, and, most recently, has come to encompass several variations of a linked cultural complex. Groups that are part of this complex occupy areas in the Midwestern and Southeastern United States, and exhibit general similarities in site arrangement, social organization, and iconography (Blitz 2010:2-3; Steponaitis 1986:387-388). The necessity of a collective term for these contemporaneous groups has been revisited time and again as cultural variations between groups occupying the prehistoric North American landscape have been identified, and as the boundaries of the Mississippian occupation

area have been redefined by new site discoveries. Mississippian populations varied significantly in behavior both inter-regionally and intra-regionally. A distinct variation of Mississippian culture is seen in the collective archaeological remains found throughout the Carolina Piedmont.

More recent endeavors to supplement this work have included analyses of a broader range of Mississippian settlements. Variations found among and between regions and sites of different sizes have called into question many of the assumptions used in past interpretations. The dynamics of social organization, site arrangement, group behavior, and the development of political power are all being readdressed as a result of contemporary research (Boudreaux 2007; Blitz 2010:7; Hammerstedt 2005:11; Lorenz 1996:145-146; Pauketat 2007:18-26; Peebles and Kus 1977:421-424). The following analysis of site development as it relates to social organization at the Town Creek site in North Carolina, is intended to contribute to a better understanding of the variations found among Mississippian societies, especially in regard to burial behavior.

Research Trends in Mississippian Studies

Theoretical frameworks structure the way Mississippian culture is analyzed and understood. The culture historians of the early to mid-twentieth century emphasized the recognition of separate culture groups, especially through the identification of distinctive styles of material culture (Johnson 2010:18-19; Teltser 1995:55-56; Trigger 2006:232-233). Pottery styles and materials used in artifact production were all used to define the Mississippian cultural tradition. Seriation methods separated stylistic attributes of the Mississippians from other groups, providing a relative temporal context for early complex societies (Gibson 1993:18-35; Lyman et al. 1997:94-95).Technological development and the demand to incorporate more

scientific techniques into archaeological research saw the rise of processualism during the 1960's and 1970's. The application of ethnohistoric and ethnographic analogy allowed scholars to bridge the temporal gap between the static archaeological record and the dynamic nature of historic and contemporary groups (Hudson 1976:498-501; Johnson 2010:23-30; Pauketat and Emerson 1991:924; Trigger 2006:405-407). Historic groups such as the Natchez, Choctaw, and Creek were used as plausible analogs for the formation of the Mississippian archaeological record (Brown 1971:102-107; Knight 1990:17-20, 2007:54-59). The computer age further allowed researchers to bolster their interpretations of data with statistical support. Critiques of the processualists' scientific methods gave way to the post-processual movement, characterized by the pursuit of a better understanding of place agency, individual identity, symbolism, and belief systems (Johnson 2010:105-111; Saitta 1994:201-202; Trigger 2006:451-452). In Mississippian studies, the interpretation of group dynamics, the motivation behind cultural developments, and the symbolic meaning of the Mississippian's distinct iconography emerged as central themes (Blitz 2010:21-23; Galloway 1989; Reilly and Garber 2007; Pauketat and Emerson1991:920, 2010:16-18; Wilson 2010:3-4). Current research has synthesized the contributions of some or all of these perspectives to create more extensive interpretations of Mississippian culture that satisfy research objectives from multiple angles (Hegmon 2003:216-218; Johnson 2010:232-233; Trigger 2006:497-508). The distinctive artifact complexes and settlement patterns defined by culture historians are still used to recognize Mississippian groups; however, the meaning behind their presence is comprehensively analyzed through processual and post-processual interpretive techniques including ethnographic analogy and statistical analysis, with attention to agency, symbolism, ideology, and meaning (Blitz 2010; Hally 2008; Hegmon 2003).

Dynamic shifts in the interpretation of Mississippian culture are the result of innovative methods and evolving perspectives over time. The recent comingling of methodological advancements and theoretical approaches continues to yield more comprehensive interpretations of Mississippian societies. Current popular topics most pertinent to my research include the debate over typically assumed definitions and paradigms regarding chiefdoms, the mechanisms behind site development, and social organization within Mississippian societies (Blitz 2010:1-6; Hegmon 2003:218-225; Livingood 2008:3-7; Pauketat 2007:3-4).

Methods characteristic of past theoretical paradigms have long addressed the topic of social organization in Mississippian archaeology. The recent trend in combining methods from multiple perspectives and disciplines has yielded new interpretations through the pursuit of determining the role of social segments within Mississippian societies. While previous research has mainly contributed to debates over the recognition of social rank and political hierarchy, current studies show that the dynamics of social segments were a driving force behind the increase in social complexity observable in the archaeological remains we study today (Blitz 2010:9-10; Livingood 2008:3-4; Knight 1990:9-17; Wilson 2008:11-3, 2010:8-9). The behaviors of these groups can be tracked through the study of spatial and temporal relations between sites, features, and artifacts. As groups became more defined, they created group-specific features and behavioral patterns that are often spatially recognizable. Evidence of this has been seen at large sites such as Etowah and Moundville, and also at smaller sites such as Town Creek (Boudreaux 2007:82; King 2001:12; Wilson et al. 2010:75-77). Based on ethnographic analogy with historic Indian groups, it is likely that kin-based clans were an important social division within Mississippian societies. Clans were associated with social functions and values, bestowing upon its members a thematic characterization, or persona (Knight 1990:9-10; Swanton 1931:79-81).

The presence and significance of clans has been recognized among Mississippian populations, although variability in the social groups they constituted has become the basis for much recent research (Blitz 2010:14-15; Blitz and Livingood 2004:298-299; King 2001:11-12; Wilson 2010:9-10). Clans likely consisted of multiple lineages or household groups (Knight 2010:358-360). Based on ethnographic analogy with historic Southeastern Indians, it is likely that matrilineal relationships determined membership in Mississippian clans and sub-clan groups (Hudson 1976:186-187; Knight 1990:6). Lineages and household groups may have been political or economically corporate in nature, meaning that they cooperated in the acquisition and maintenance of land or other resources (Blitz 2004:298-299; Knight 1998:54). Such groups are usually identified archaeologically based on spatial patterns in the distribution of public architecture, houses or burials. Although the nature of sub-clan groups is often difficult to discern and confirm in regard to a defined space due to group agency and regional variability (Allen and Richardson 1971:44; Knight 1998:52; Wilson 2008:12), social divisions were maintained as a means to perpetuate social identity and legitimatize claims to social functions, positions, and/or economic resources (Blitz 2010:9-10; Knight 1990:9-12; Wilson 2010:6).

Mississippian Mortuary Contexts

Mortuary contexts are the most commonly observable manifestations of social group representation available for spatial analysis (Ashmore and Geller 2005:81-83; Blitz 2010:16; Charles 1995:81; Goldstein 1981:53-54). While the methods used in this analysis will be described in greater detail in Chapter 2, a brief overview of similar mortuary analyses from the Southeast will provide some context for the research presented here. In comparing the large Mississippian center at Moundville in western central Alabama with the smaller King site in

northwestern Georgia, variability in burial behavior can be seen from an intraregional perspective. Analyses of both sites report several instances of similar burial patterning to that found at Town Creek. The conclusions reached by researchers about the Moundville and King burial patterns will be used in the interpretation of the similar behaviors analyzed in this thesis.

In their chapter, "Social and Spatial Dimensions of Moundville Mortuary Practices," Wilson et al. (2010) sampled five discrete mortuary clusters that were found overlapping abandoned domestic structures at Moundville. They surveyed burial attributes that included spatial relation, age, sex, and grave good presence and quality, and found cultural patterning, especially in regard to the sex of interred individuals. Of the grave goods found, the vast majority were associated with male burials, while females generally were buried without any artifacts. This divide was indicative of an achieved social status structure, as an ascribed status structure would be assumed in the presence of grave goods cross-cutting age and sex categories (Marcoux 2010:160; Wilson et al. 2010:77-83). Of further interest at Moundville is the spatial analysis of interment practices. In several cases, it was found that when a newly dug burial pit intruded upon an older burial pit, the remains in the previous grave were pushed aside to accommodate the new burial. Evidence of this practice was observed in the presence of partial or comingled remains in association with articulated sets of remains in the same pit (Wilson et al. 2010:86-87). Also seen in at least one of the cemeteries analyzed at Moundville is the presence of a central burial from which peripheral burials radiate outward to form the mortuary space (Wilson et al. 2010:85-86). These formal cemetery areas at Moundville have been interpreted as spaces maintained by corporate kin groups in order to retain claims to land resources and political power (Wilson et al. 2010:87-88; see also Goldstein 1980; Saxe 1970). The authors interpreted the central burial as a possible founding group member, or ancestor, who was surrounded by later generations of group

members in order to reiterate the group's social position in the Moundville community (Wilson 2008:11-14; Wilson et al. 2010:86).

A similar analysis of the King site was undertaken by Hally (2008). Similar to the findings at Moundville, the 250 burials at King were deliberately clustered in discrete areas around the site, especially in association with habitation areas and the central plaza. Burial attributes examined included age, sex, burial location, burial position, health and body modification, pit form and depth, and artifact presence and quality. In mapping these attributes, Hally was able to visually assess spatial clustering and patterning of the attributes. Reminiscent of the burial patterning seen at Moundville, the majority of grave goods were found in association with adult male burials, while females were associated with relatively few artifacts. Of the individuals found with artifacts, further patterning was found in regard to the age of the individual, with adult males associated with grave goods indicative of social prestige. Although age, sex, and grave good attributes were the predominant categories used to distinguish sub-groups at King, Hally (2008:184-270) also extended his analysis beyond the demographic and artifact data to include analysis of body positioning, body orientation, health and body modification, and pit depth and dimension. These attributes generally cross-cut the age and sex categories, although extended body positioning was generally associated with male internments. As at Moundville, the patterning observed in regard to age and sex attributes is indicative of an achieved status structure at the King site (Hally 2008:497-500). Similar to the interpretation of Moundville mortuary behaviors, variability between household groupings indicate that members of discrete social groups appeared to utilize designated spaces as exclusive burial grounds to maintain claims to group resources (Hally 2008:184-270; 302-308; 337-369; 497-534).

The Town Creek Site

The Town Creek site is located near Mount Gilead, North Carolina in the southern Piedmont region near the Pee Dee River (Boudreaux 2005:12-14). The material culture of the group that occupied the site during the Mississippian period (ca. A.D. 1100-1400), especially their ceramics and architecture, is similar to other sites in the region and is part of a regional variant of Mississippian culture known as South Appalachian Mississippian (Figure 2.1) (Boudreaux 2005:12; Ferguson 1971). Town Creek consists of a platform mound and an associated village with domestic and public structures arranged around a central plaza.

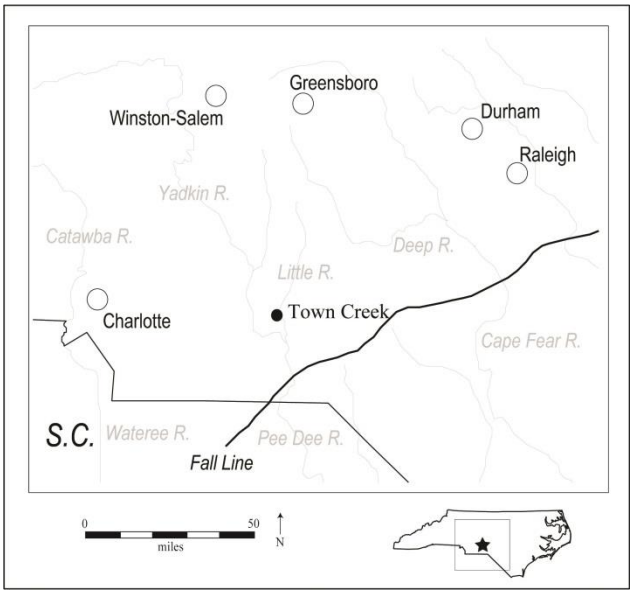

Figure 2.1. Town Creek location (adapted from Boudreaux 2010:Figure 11.1).

Town Creek is one of the most extensively excavated sites in the Southeast, and this thesis will draw from some of the vast amount of information produced by that work. Excavations at Town Creek, originally known as Frutchey Mound, began in 1937 as part of a Works Progress Administration project that was sponsored by the University of North Carolina

(UNC) (Boudreaux 2005:14-15, 2007:9; Coe 1995:192-193; Ward and Davis 1999:12-13). The site had undergone some looting activity prior to 1925 when the mound was cross-cut with a mule team and drag pan, creating a trench 20 feet deep through the mound's center. Professional excavations were proposed in order to assess the damage and to further retrieve archaeological data. Work at the site was overseen by Joffre Coe of UNC (Coe 1995; Lyon 1996:118). The early stages of excavations focused on the mound, which was given a separate site designation, Mg2, from the rest of the site, which was designated Mg3 (Coe 1995:46-49). The archaeological deposits of Mg3, relevant to this analysis, consist of a plowzone under which archaeological features were visible in the subsoil. Excavation methods included hand excavating and screening the top layers of soil, and then documenting the underlying features and soil stains (Boudreaux 2007:9-13; Coe 1995:45-60).

Town Creek has a long history of Native American habitation spanning from 10,000 B.C. until around A.D. 1700 (Boudreaux 2005:258; Coe 1995:122). The most intensive period of use was the Mississippian occupation which began around A.D. 1150. During the Town Creek phase (A.D. 1150-1300), the site consisted of several structures surrounding a central, open plaza. At least 10 circular structures, which have been interpreted as houses, were present along the north and south edges of the plaza (Boudreaux 2005:82-83). These spatially discrete structures, which encircle dense clusters of burials, are representative of the presence of separate groups, probably corporate kin groups, living together within the community. Also, at least two rectangular public buildings were found at the east and west edges of the plaza (Boudreaux 2007:49-55, 2010:199-204). Public buildings were used as meeting places for communal decision-making, and architectural changes in such gathering places can be indicative of changes in social complexity over time (Anderson and Sassaman 2012:168-173; Boudreaux 2007:45-46). The time period

from A.D. 1250-1350 at Town Creek, which spanned the late Town Creek and early Leak phases, is characterized by the construction of an earthen mound over earlier public buildings on the west side of the site. At least two, and probably three, public buildings were located on top of the mound at each stage of its construction. The full range of the mound's functions is not known, but at least one context indicates that large group gatherings took place there (Boudreaux 2007:31-38). On the eastern edge of Town Creek's plaza, the area occupied early on by another public building was bounded by a rectangular enclosure during or after the Leak phase (Boudreaux 2005:178, 2007:39-40).

The continuity of the settlement's architectural arrangement can be seen throughout the Mississippian occupation, although many of the constructions were rebuilt and repurposed over time (Boudreaux 2005:260-262). At least four of the circular houses that were present early in Town Creek's history, a time that coincides with important changes in public architecture, were expanded by approximately twice their original diameter later in the community's history (Boudreaux 2005:239-243; 251-252, 2007:55-60, 2010:196; 216-222). The structures that were transformed from houses into cemeteries exhibit the highest burial densities at Town Creek, and one of them, Structure 7, will be the focus of this analysis.

The Mortuary Component of the Town Creek Site

Two hundred eighteen Mississippian burials (Figure 2.2) were interred at Town Creek. Ninety-seven burials – those interred within the limits of pre-mound rectangular public buildings and small circular structures that were probably houses – date to the site's early occupation before construction of the mound. Only adult women and subadults were interred within the confines of some pre-mound public structures, although ethnographic accounts relay that males

generally held positions of political authority (Hudson 1976:223-224). The exclusive interment of females in these public buildings may be related to the matrilineal organization of the society (Boudreaux 2010:212-213; Hudson 1976:186-187; Knight 1990:6). Only older adults were found buried in another public building, patterning consistent with the ethnohistoric record, as the elderly often comprised a discrete social group in Native American communities, and were venerated for their wisdom and experience (Gearing 1958:1149; Hudson 1976:225). In yet another area within the public architecture, only infants were found. The reason for the absence of adult individuals in these contexts is yet unclear (Boudreaux 2010:214). Burials in the circular domestic structures are believed to be representative of household groups consisting of individuals of both sexes and all age categories (Boudreaux 2007:89-91, 2010:221-222). Architectural changes during Town Creek's Mississippian occupation included the construction of the platform mound, the construction of the rectangular enclosure area, and the transformation of some circular houses into enclosed cemeteries. Considering the burial evidence, it appears that the Mississippian community at Town Creek consisted of discrete social groups, possibly household, lineage, or clan groups. The variability in demographic data recovered from the domestic area burials, especially the enclosed cemeteries which contain the highest density of burials at Town Creek, preliminarily points toward groupings based on kin relations, and the maintenance of discrete burial areas over time is indicative of their continued claims to specific resources (Boudreaux 2010:201-230).

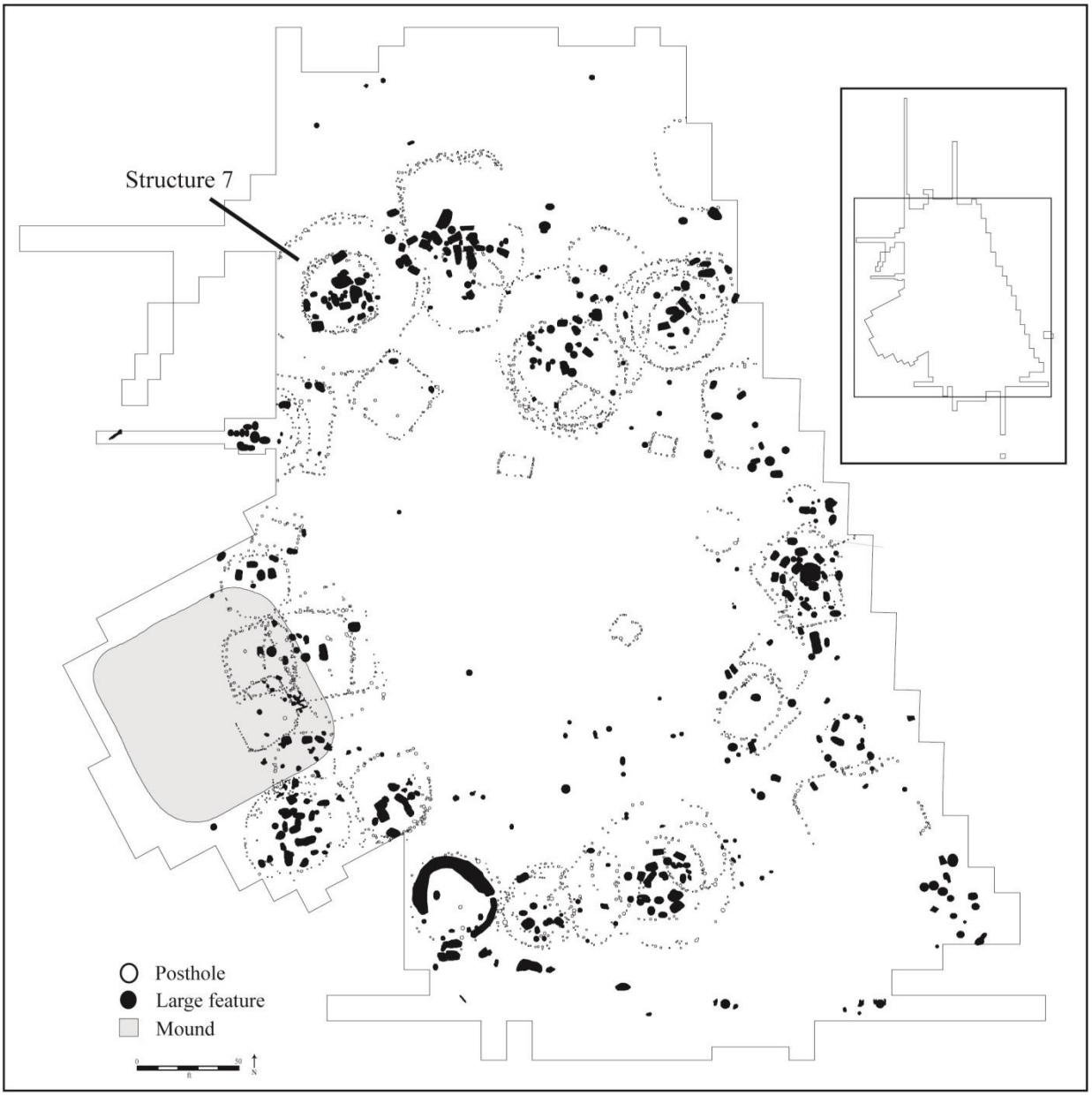

Figure 2.2. Identified structures and mortuary features at Town Creek (adapted from Boudreaux 2005:Figure 3.16).

Chapter 3: Methods

The methods described in this chapter are inspired by previous analyses that successfully combined techniques of mortuary analysis with the use of ethnographic analogy. The incorporation of these elements allows for interdisciplinary and comprehensive interpretation supported by the written record. This chapter begins with an overview of relevant topics in mortuary analysis. This chapter also provides an ethnographic background that serves as a cultural context for the results discussed later, and it describes the techniques attempted to accomplish the research objectives.

Mortuary Analysis

Mortuary contexts provide archaeologists with unique and symbolic forms of cultural information (Charles 2005:16-19; Sullivan and Mainfort 2010a:1-2; Trinkaus 1995:53-54). In the early twentieth century, scholars studied ritualized funerary behaviors through ethnographic observation and theoretical analysis. Studies of aboriginal groups by van Gennep (1960) and Hertz (1960) in the 1900's that were translated into English in the 1960's brought attention to the value of mortuary ritual analysis in anthropological scholarship (Parker Pearson 1999:22-23; Rakita and Buikstra 2005a:2-3). Comparative analyses revealed cross-cultural similarities in the social function of mortuary rites in regard to the transition of physical remains from life to death, the soul's separation from the physical body, and social obligations and cultural explanations of death for the living (Hertz 1960:27-29; van Gennep 1960:14). That these general purposes were found to span societies geographically suggested their ability to span societies temporally as well (Bell 1997:36-38; Rakita and Buikstra 2005b:97-98). As a communicative tool, mortuary rites memorialize the life of the deceased, representing, in some cases, the individual as he or she was

in life, while associating the individual in other cases with a cultural ideal through symbolic acts and artifacts. Thus, rites function to benefit the living, to perpetuate and adhere to a belief system, and to honor the life of the deceased. It is left to the researcher, through responsible observation and scholarship, to extract and interpret meaning from archaeological mortuary contexts (King 2010:54-55; Parker Pearson 1982:99-101, 1999:193-195; Tarlow 1999:37-38).

Inspired by the findings of early analysts, mid to late-century processualists saw an opportunity to combine scientific methods with ethnographic observations (Rakita and Buikstra 2005a:2-3). The doctoral dissertation of Arthur Saxe, *Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices* was finished in 1970. Its now-famed eighth hypothesis proposed that corporate groups in competition with each other for limited resources will maintain a bounded disposal area for their deceased in order to legitimize and retain their rights to those resources (Brown 1995:13-15; Parker Pearson 1999:29-30; Saxe 1970:119). Soon after, the research of Lewis Binford (1971) proposed that the complexity of behaviors observed in mortuary contexts corresponded to the complexity of the societies that created them. Further, Binford (1971) argued that the combinations of dimensions, or facets of social persona found within the mortuary record, defined an individual culturally, as well as within a social hierarchy (Binford 1971:17-21; Parker Pearson 1999:29-30; Tarlow 1999:10-11). The combination of these concepts, now known as the Binford-Saxe Hypothesis, brought new attention to mortuary analysis as an analytical tool in studying entire archaeological populations. Using the same precepts determined for individual burials, varying levels of social complexity were determined in the presence of multifaceted burial behaviors and redundant patterning. Assuming a pyramidal rank structure, those occupying positions of higher rank, identified through the representation of more dimensions of social persona, would be less common in mortuary contexts. In comparing individuals in this

way, the social hierarchy could theoretically be reconstructed from burial attribute analysis (Brown 1995:9-12; Gamble et al. 2001:2; Peebles and Kus 1977:431; Tainter 1975:2). In exploring multiple dimensions of funerary behaviors, processualists turned their attention to the expenditure of energy put into burial rites and representation. Tainter (1978), among others, suggested that higher levels of effort put into burial ritual were indicative of higher social status. In qualifying specific dimensions of behavior, less common practices and materials were assumed to correspond to those occupying social positions of limited availability, and therefore, a more elite rank (Goldstein 1981:54-55; Parker Pearson 1999:74-75; Peebles and Kus 1977:431).

The post-processual movement brought about a reevaluation of processual assumptions in mortuary archaeology (Braun 1981:410-412; Carr 1995:181-182; Goldstein 1981:56; Parker Pearson 1993:204-205). The primary themes emphasized in the post-processual perspective—which include agency, gender, symbology, spatial arrangement, individual identity, and group identity—continue to dominate interpretations in mortuary archaeology today, especially regarding variability in burial treatment (Parker Pearson 1982:112, 1993:226-227 Tarlow 1999; Trinkaus 1995:54-55). Some of these post-processual perspectives are particularly relevant for this thesis, within which I will emphasize the significance of a defined mortuary space and the maintenance of group identity through ethnographic analogy in the interpretation of the cemetery at Structure 7 at Town Creek. Inferences made regarding the spatial arrangement of the burials will be supported or refuted by redundant patterning in burial depth, age, sex, the presence of grave goods, the type(s) of grave goods associated with the burial, body positioning, and body orientation.

Lynne Goldstein readdressed Saxe's eighth hypothesis in her 1976 doctoral dissertation. She found that while the relationship of a group to an exclusive bounded disposal area for the dead was often indicative of corporate group organization, it could not be taken as a defining factor of group complexity (Goldstein 1976, 1981:61; Morris 1991:148-149; Rakita and Buikstra 2005a:5-6). Rather, cemetery spaces are multidimensional in meaning, and the presence or absence of a cemetery may be a dimension of cultural behavior in itself. Further, each of these spaces should be considered separately as repositories for additional cultural details that can significantly contribute to the interpretation of the groups that created them (Goldstein 1981:56-57; Parker Pearson 1993:100-101; Rakita and Buikstra 2005a:8).

The study of cemetery arrangement must consider the variables of horizontal stratigraphy and status differentiation (Parker Pearson 1999:11-15). Horizontal stratigraphy places the formation of a cemetery into a chronological context. When a foundation burial is identified, it can serve as a temporal marker from which the cemetery expands and radiates outward. In this way, a relative temporal narrative of burial behavior can be constructed (Parker Pearson 1999:11-12; Ucko 1969:276). Arrangement based on social status can be identified through the analysis of burial dimensions such as age, sex, grave goods, and body treatment (Ashmore and Geller 2005:82-83; Binford 1971:17; Parker Pearson 1999:12-15). The motivation behind the maintenance of a discrete area for the exclusive interment of group members has been interpreted in numerous ways. The most dominant theory, the legitimization of group claims to rights and resources, was described earlier in this chapter. Other researchers contend that while this behavior may have been competitively motivated, it also served to preserve and perpetuate identity within the group (Smith 2008:30-31; Wilson 2010:4).

In recent years, a multitude of mortuary analyses have investigated Mississippian sites with a focus on the motivations behind the delineation of discrete mortuary spaces and the meanings contained within cemeteries (Sullivan and Mainfort 2010). Although some broad analyses of the entire mortuary component at the Town Creek site have already been completed (Boudreaux 2005, 2007, 2010; Driscoll 2001), the methods described in this chapter are aimed at achieving a more detailed interpretation of the Structure 7 cemetery.

Ethnographic Analogy

The processual movement conventionalized the use of ethnographic analogy in archaeology (Binford 1980; Trigger 2006:416-417). The process of ethnographic analogy extrapolates the behaviors of extinct groups through the observation and study of living and historic groups, relating the known to the unknown (Johnson 2010:50-51; Marcus 2008:253-254). While many of the conclusions reached through this method are vulnerable to researcher bias, the reliability of interpretations can be reinforced through cultural and geographical continuity, especially in the study of mortuary remains (Parker Pearson 1999:34-35; Ucko 1969:263). In the case of the Mississippian groups inhabiting the Southeast, documented historic Indian groups occupying the same area have served as a sound and viable analog (Brown 1971:102-107; King 2010:61-65; Knight 1990:2; 1998:54-60; Marcoux 2010:145).

Communities of Natchez, Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw Indians were documented throughout the Southeast by seventeenth and eighteenth century explorers and by nineteenth and early twentieth century ethnographers on a mission to salvage the cultural history of the dwindling populations (Cushman 1962[1899]; Hudson 1976; Swanton 1931; 1970; 1979; 2006). Reports compiled by the United States government and the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of

American Ethnology, among others, detail a variety of aspects of Southeastern Indian culture including social and political organization (Hudson 1976:202-234; Swanton 1931:55-84; 1979:641-654; 2006:18-44); family structure (Hudson 1976:185-196; Swanton 1931:84-90; 1979:665-670); subsistence (Hudson 1976:258-316; Swanton 1979:265-381); ceremonies and rituals (Hudson 1976:317-374; Swanton 1931:127-139, 170-194, 221-226; 2006:53-63); art, music, and recreation (Cushman 1962[1899]:123-135, 155-156; Hudson 1976:376-426; Swanton 1931:140-160; 1979:624-629); and religion and belief systems (Cushman 1962[1899]:300-302, 435; Hudson 1976:121-183; Swanton 1931:194-220; 1979:742-782; 2006:75-100). While all of these topics provide valuable analogies for the reconstruction of Mississippian culture in the Southeast, those most relevant to this analysis are the detailed descriptions of social and familial structure, belief systems, and funerary behavior.

Many Southeastern Indian communities consisted of ranked, exogamous, matrilineal clans (Knight 1990:10). These groups were believed to have originated in ancient times, each represented by a totemic figure, often a local animal (Swanton 1931:79-84). Clans were not blood-related, but consisted of lineages, or kin groups, that were (Knight 1990:5-6). Those belonging to the same clan were believed to share collective characteristics that affirmed their membership within the group and legitimized their rights to property, resources, and privileges (Hudson 1976:191-196; Knight 1990:5-6; Swanton 1931:79-84; 1979:654-661; 2006:24-41). Within the clans, lineages were distinguished through the maintenance of separate domestic structures or household groups (Hudson 1976:213-218; Knight 1990:6, 2010:358-360). While women held a central role in the domestic sphere, political leaders were primarily male. According to the ethnographic accounts, male chiefs and clan representatives met in public

spaces and participated in fellowship rituals as they collaborated in community decision-making (Hudson 1976:223-226; Swanton 1931:96-99; 1970:374-375; 2006:41-44).

In many communities, the space chosen for meetings and ceremonies was characterized by a square formation, or "square ground" (King 2010:61; Knight 1998:58). This feature, believed to be a continuation from late Mississippian traditions, was documented throughout Southeastern groups and consisted of a central hearth surrounded by four benches corresponding to each of the cardinal directions, forming a square (Hally 2008:148; Hudson 1976:220; King 2010:61). When the central fire was lit, the smoke that rose upward was believed to connect the world of the living to the Upper World of their cosmology (King 2010:62; Reilly 2004:127). The presence of a square formation signified a delineated ceremonial space, and the area around the fire encompassing the cardinal directions became sacred ground (King 2010:62). Representations of the square are found throughout Mississippian and Southeastern Indian iconography, as well as in community and architectural arrangement (Hally 2008:522-523; Hudson 1976:220-221; King 2010:63-65).

Although the square formation sacralized all that surrounded it when activated, each of the cardinal directions could also carry its own meaning (Hudson 1976:132; Knight 1998:58). Charles Hudson's *Southeastern Indians* (1976) details such meanings for historic Cherokee groups. Associated with trouble, power, and dream states, the north was reserved for warriors and leaders. In opposition, nobles and people of high social status sat to the south, which was associated with peace and happiness. To the east and west sat other community members, although some accounts describe the west as the space occupied by the chief and his assistants. The east and west were also opposing forces, with the east representing life and the west representing death (Hudson 1976:132, 220, 224, 344). Directions also held significance outside

of the ceremonial sphere, playing key roles in medicinal practice and oral tradition (Hudson 1976:152-153, 346-347). Origin myths of several groups describe a genesis in the West or Northwest (Swanton 1970:23-24; 2006:2-7).

The burial behaviors of Southeastern Indian groups varied a great deal in accordance with the deceased individual's social status (Hudson 1976:334). Participants in the rites generally consisted of kin and fellow clan members. The deaths of prominent political figures were accompanied by elaborate ceremonies that, in some cases, lasted for days. The mourners would prepare the body according to the particular clan's traditions, and then partake in ritualized wailing during the ceremony (Cushman 1962[1899]:144-146, 165-169; Hudson 1976:334-335). There are also several accounts documenting sacrificial suicide, some documenting infanticide, as a showing of reverence and loyalty to the deceased (Cushman 1962[1899]:437-439; Hudson 1976:334). Individuals were interred with some of their possessions and ceremonial objects beneath the floors of public and domestic structures as a reminder of their affiliation with the group (Cushman 1962[1899]:404; Hudson 1976:335-336; Swanton 1931:183). In other cases, the home was destroyed at the death of the household leader and rebuilt again to signify a new phase in the life of the group (Hudson 1976:336, 368; Swanton 1970:374; 2006:58).

The ethnohistoric accounts of Southeastern Indians and their cultural practices, especially those regarding their social organization, ceremonialism, ideology, and burial practices will assist in the interpretation of the Structure 7 cemetery at Town Creek. The geographic continuity of the groups utilized in this analogy provides a reliable source of information from which the interpretations will be drawn.

Methods

The methods described in the following section are used to construct a chronological and cultural narrative for the cemetery in Structure 7 at Town Creek. The steps employed will consider chronology through the comparison of individual burial pit depths, and the representation of social dynamics through analyzing the spatial distribution of burial attributes. As many Southeastern Indian groups are known to have consisted of multiple lineages and other socially constructed factions (Knight 1990:6), it is probable that such groupings will be represented, and can be recognized, through mortuary behavior. For each of the attributes analyzed here, temporal and cultural dimensions of group agency, or independent behaviors characteristic of specific groups, will be considered as possible causes for variation among the burials, besides variation based on differences in social status. Although the burial activity in Structure 7 likely occurred over a relatively short period of time, certain behaviors and meanings may have changed over time or differed between groups (Cannon 2005:41-43; Parker Pearson 1999:32-33). Such instances may account for outlying burials that do not fit in with an identified pattern.

A review of previous Mississippian mortuary analyses has provided the set of socially significant behaviors with ethnographic backing that is described in the following section. I consider variables, both individually and in combination with others, in my attempt to identify separate groupings within the Structure 7 cemetery at Town Creek. The data collected through the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) inventory compiled by the Research Laboratories of Archaeology (RLA) and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) (Davis et al. 1996), through the doctoral dissertation research of Driscoll (2001), and through the doctoral dissertation research of Boudreaux (2005) are used in these analyses. In

order to visually analyze the distribution of attributes, they were mapped using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software. Maps developed are then compared to maps of other attributes to identify the occurrence of any redundant spatial patterning that could indicate the presence of one or more discrete social groups in the cemetery, and further to distinguish individuals of differential status within the group. Upon completion of this process, any groupings identified can then be interpreted as to their meaning within the cultural context provided by my ethnographic research.

Preliminary Spatial Examination

Before attempting to specifically analyze the data, a familiarity with the arrangement of the burials must be gained in order to recognize the presence of any deliberate spatial patterning (Goldstein 1981:58; Marcoux 2010:161). Patterning may be identifiable simply through the proximity of individual interments. Keeping in mind the principles of cemetery organization, a sense of the horizontal stratigraphy and any visible divisions that may be indicative of arrangement based on differential social status will be sought (Parker Pearson 1999:11-12; Wilson et al. 2010:85-86). Further, burial layout based on cosmology and community arrangements have been documented at other Mississippian sites in the Southeast (Brown 2010:38-41; Hally 2008:522-523; King 2010:61-65; Knight 1998:54-55; Wilson 2010:14-15). The above review of ethnohistoric and ethnographic accounts has provided background information as to belief systems and important symbols that may play a key role in the visual recognition of any cosmological arrangements present in Structure 7. This method may provide a tentative identification of possible groupings within the cemetery that can be further verified through the spatial analysis of burial details and attributes.

Burial Depth

The depth of each burial pit, from the original ground surface to the bottom of the pit, will be considered. I obtained these data from the original burial forms, which are curated with the rest of the Town Creek collection by the RLA at UNC. The laws of superposition posit that older features, in this case, burials, will be found beneath more recent ones (Parker Pearson 1999:114). This considered, analysis of burial depth could be useful in constructing a relative chronology for the burial activity within the structure. However, several factors are capable of limiting the value of conclusions reached from this method. Erosion and post-depositional activities, such as plowing, can inconsistently alter the elevation of the ground surface (Hally 2008:40-43, 192, 202) Also, in the event of dense burial activity and superimposing and intruding burials, such as are observed in Structure 7, the top of the original grave surface may be indistinguishable above the remains due to obstruction caused by peripheral burial activity (Parker Pearson 1999:200). In any event, the construction of a relative chronology may be possible through the comparison of burial depths based on the assumption that deeper pits are older than shallower ones within the cemetery.

Age

While data in regard to age at the time of death can provide valuable information as to the overall health of a population, it is used here primarily as a means to identify culturally-imposed models of status and behavior through spatial patterning (Buikstra 1981:126-131; Sofaer 2006:117-143). Throughout the literature, age has been a key variable in the indication of the status structure employed by a group. In conjunction with other variables such as sex, grave good presence, and grave good type, age data are integral in ascertaining whether status levels were

ascribed or achieved. Patterning expected of a group with an ascribed status structure would include similar treatment of individuals of all ages. Conversely, an achieved status structure would be characterized by differential treatment of individuals based on age (Hally 2008:497-519; Marcoux 2010:146, 150, 160; Wilson et al. 2010:83). Further, individuals occupying positions of more elite status may be expected to have longer life spans, as they likely had greater access to resources (Cook 1981:133-135). Other interpretations reached through the analysis of age data could assist in the identification of kin-based groupings within the cemetery. Other analyses have arrived at the conclusion that the representation of multiple age categories within one burial cluster is likely representative of a family group, whereas other groups, such as political factions, may consist only of members of a specific age category (Brown 2010:31-32; Howell and Kintigh 1996:541-542; Wilson et al. 2010:83).

Sex

As with age data, sex data can be a valuable source of information in regard to health disparities among individuals in a population, but it is again used here primarily as a means to identify culturally imposed models of status and behavior through spatial patterning (Sofaer 2006:89-116). Sex can also play a major role in indicating the status structure employed by a group. In conjunction with other variables such as age, grave good presence, and grave good type, sex data is integral in ascertaining whether status levels within a group were ascribed or achieved. Patterning expected of a group with an ascribed status structure would include similar treatment of individuals of both sexes. Conversely, an achieved status structure would be characterized by differential treatment of individuals based on sex (Hally 2008:497-519; Marcoux 2010:160; Wilson et al. 2010:83). Also in regard to sex, the literature has made note of

individuals occupying transgendered roles, as evidenced by association with culturally gendered grave goods (Hally 2008:339-346; Parker Pearson 1999:95-102). These examples will be considered should any outliers appear in this regard. Similar to the interpretations possible through the spatial analysis of the age data, the existence of kin-based groupings can be identified through the presence of both sex categories. Other social factions, such as political groups, are likely to consist of only males, as suggested by the ethnographic accounts (Brown 2010:31-32; Howell and Kintigh 1996:541-542; Swanton 1931:94-95; Wilson et al. 2010:83).

Grave Goods

The inclusion of personal and ceremonial objects in burials is well documented in ethnohistoric and ethnographic accounts (Cushman 1962[1899]:404; Hudson 1976:335-336), and is a common characteristic of Mississippian mortuary behavior (Hally 2008:222-270; Marcoux 2010:163-166; Rodning and Moore 2010:82-83; Wilson et al. 2010:83-85). The results of the methods used here are intended to assist in the interpretation of the social structure employed by the community members at Town Creek. Further, the spatial location of specific objects may delineate discrete social groupings within the cemetery. Artifacts found associated with burials in this research will be analyzed according to their presence, type, frequency, and spatial location within the cemetery. Beads, especially those manufactured from shell, were a common embellishment on the dress and accessories of Native Americans (Cushman 1962[1899]:395; Swanton 1931:43), and are consequently ubiquitous in many archaeological contexts, including cemeteries (Brown 2010:43; Prentice 1987:193). Thus, in order to efficiently and effectively delineate social group representation within the Structure 7 cemetery, the presence of shell beads will not be considered in this analysis.

Body Positioning

The positioning of the body in interment is a culturally prescribed, deliberate act. Thus, variation in burial positioning observed within one cemetery can be assumed to reflect the representation of differential social statuses. It can be assumed that the less common positions found may be indicative of the individual's significant social position. Once identified, the burial attributes of these individuals can be compared to others to interpret their role within the group (Hally 2008:206-212).

Body Orientation

Orientation of the body is also likely a deliberate act. Just as architecture and cemetery arrangement are known to reiterate cosmological layouts, the orientation of individual burials may reiterate architectural or cosmological arrangements. Individuals oriented the same way, or whose orientations form a pattern reminiscent of a culturally significant arrangement, may be representative of a discrete social group and can be further analyzed for redundant patterning among other attributes (Brown 2010:32-33; Hally 2008:214-219; Wilson et al. 2010:89).

Summary

Ethnohistoric and ethnographic accounts of Southeastern Indians have provided a viable analog for the archaeological remains at Mississippian sites for decades (Brown 1971:102-107; King 2010:61-65; Knight 1990:2; 1998:54-60; Marcoux 2010:145). The geographic and cultural continuity of historic groups has strengthened the reliability of past interpretations of prehistoric sites. Upon the completion of the above methods, historical accounts will be considered in the

interpretation of any discrete social groups within the Structure 7 cemetery, should they be identified. Chapter 4 will provide an introduction to the dataset used for my research and present the specific data used and maps created for each method. A discussion of each highlights the attributes I consider successful in representing the presence of separate groupings within the cemetery. Chapter 5 will detail my interpretations of any patterning I find through the methodological background and methods described above.

Chapter 4: Data and Results

This chapter will provide a detailed overview of the cemetery within Structure 7, including a background on its excavation. The Structure 7 cemetery burial attribute data presented here, the data upon which this mortuary analysis was based, include the depth of the burial pit, the age and sex of each individual interred, associated grave goods, body positioning, and orientation. These data were selected for use in this analysis for their effectiveness in discerning cultural patterning at other Mississippian cemetery sites in the region (Hally 2008; Wilson 2010). The results of the analysis of each attribute will be presented, and, where appropriate, maps will be used to discuss spatial patterns. Any patterns identified in this process will be used in defining boundaries within the cemetery that may delineate discrete groupings.

Structure 7

Structure 7 was constructed during the Town Creek Phase (A.D. 1150-1250), and continued to be used through the Early Leak Phase (A.D. 1250-1350) (Boudreaux 2005:236-258; 2007:49-60). The building began as a small, circular, domestic structure located in the northwest corner of the Town Creek village (see Figure 2.2). Structure 7 was initially nine meters in diameter. Following the construction of the mound, posthole evidence indicates that the walls of Structure 7 were expanded outward, doubling the size of the original structure. It was around this time that the site began its transition from a residential village to a necropolis, and Structure 7 from a house to a cemetery (Boudreaux 2005:251-252; 2010:219-221). Consistent with ethnohistoric accounts (Cushman 1962[1899]:404; Hudson 1976:335-336; Swanton 1931:183), it appears that the majority of the burials were interred under the floor of the house, as most were

located within the walls of the original domestic structure. A few burials on the outer edges of the cemetery superimpose the postholes of the original structure, which indicates their deposition after the house was no longer standing (Boudreaux 2007:49-55, 2010:199-204).

Although fieldwork at Town Creek began in the 1930's, the area including the Structure 7 cemetery was not excavated until the early 1960's when Bennie Keel joined the project (Coe 1995:36). Under his supervision, archaeologists uncovered the structure, which they referred to as Mortuary D (Coe 1995:265). Fifty individual sets of human remains were found within the confines of Structure 7 (Figures 4.1 and 4.2), several of which were not recognized as separate individuals until the RLA's NAGPRA compliance inventory (Davis et al. 1996) was supplemented by the skeletal analysis completed for Driscoll's (2001) dissertation (Boudreaux 2005:270). My analysis is based on data obtained from these earlier investigations of Structure 7 and the burials it contained. Some of the data were derived from the original field forms for each excavation unit and burial within Structure 7. These forms included field sketches that detailed unique burial features and instances of superposition. The data compiled during the RLA's NAGPRA inventory provided the majority of the dataset I used, as it included information on the age, sex, grave goods, body positioning, and body orientation attributes (Davis et al. 1996). The organization of those data by Driscoll (2001) further facilitated my analysis. The information I used for my analysis is presented in Table 4.1. Although the whole of the structure was excavated at once, the completeness and detail of recording on each burial form varies widely, as also noted by Driscoll (2001).

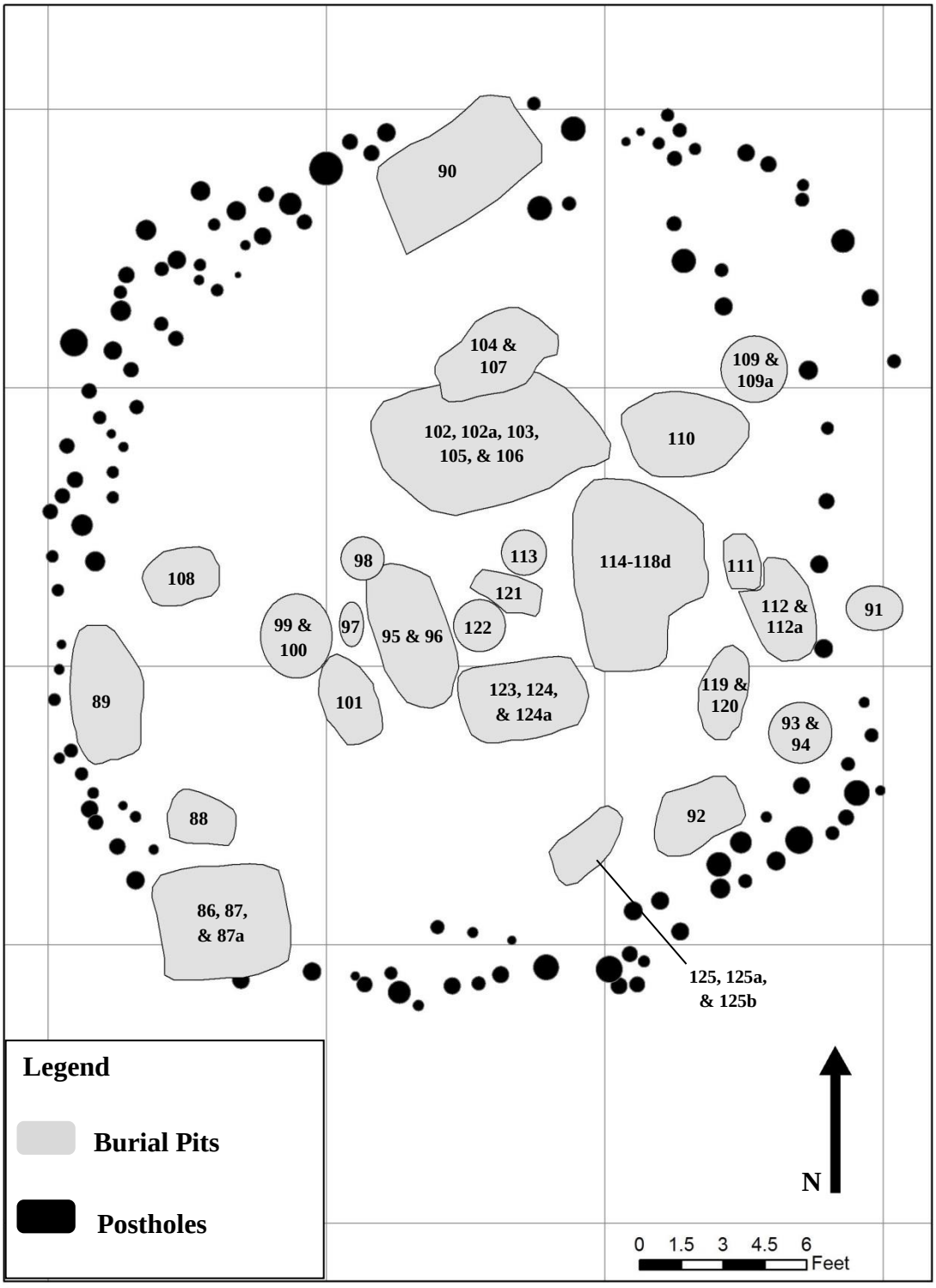

Figure 4.1. Numbered burials in Structure 7.

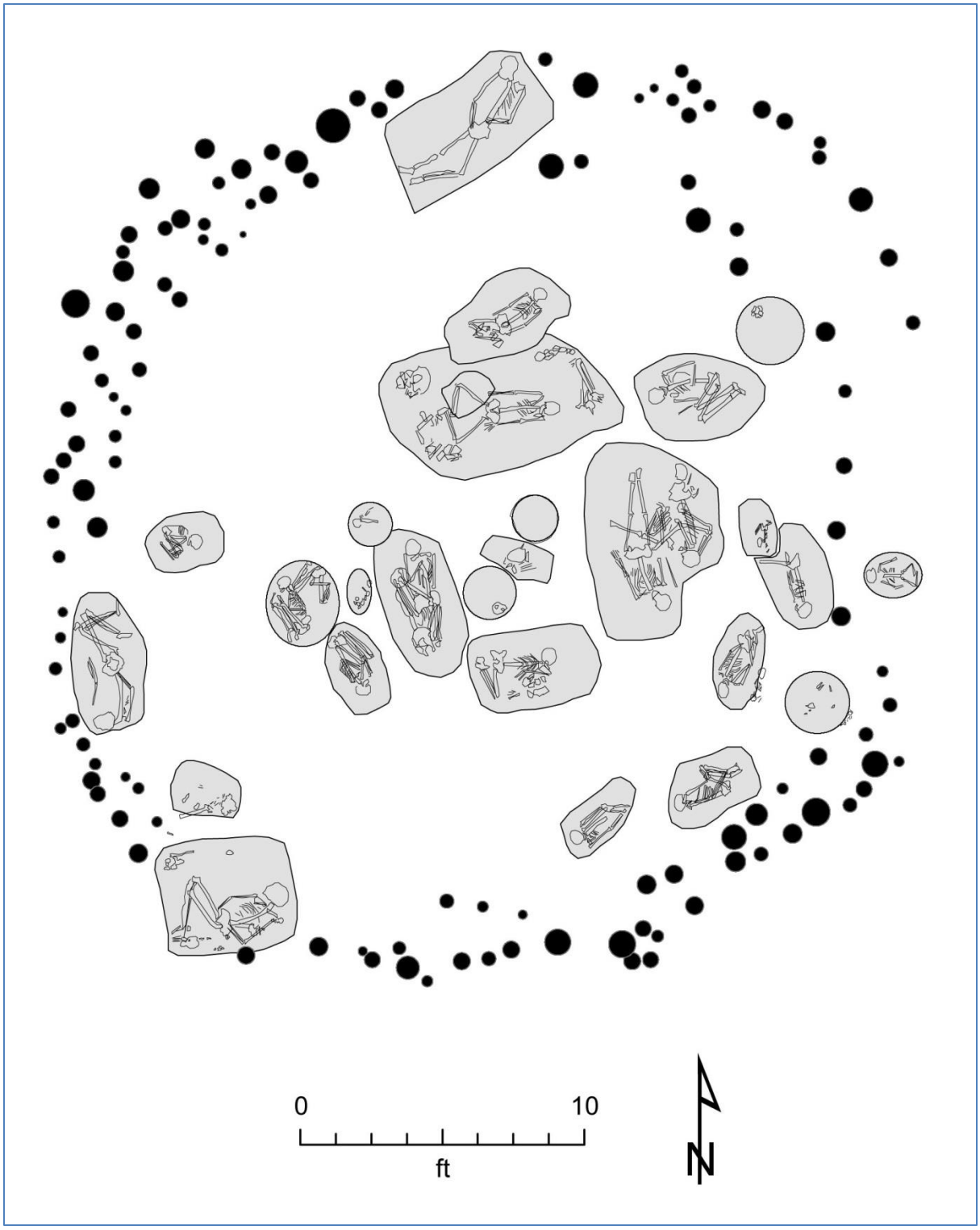

Figure 4.2. In situ drawings of burials in Structure 7.

Table 4.1. Structure 7 Burial Attributes.

Burial No.	Age Class	Sex	Burial Type	Back Position	Artifacts	Burial Depth (ft)	Burial Orientation
86	Older Adult	Female	Indeterminate	N/A	Present	Unknown	Southeast
87	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Side	Present	Unknown	East
87a	Adult	Indeterminate	No Data	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
88	Child	Indeterminate	Flexed	Indeterminate	Absent	1.6	East
89	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Side	Present	1.4	South
90	Young Adult	Male	Extended	N/A	Absent	0.8	Northeast
91	Child	Indeterminate	Flexed	Back	Absent	0.9	West
92	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Side	Present	1.9	West
93	Child	Indeterminate	Extended	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Northeast
94	Child	Indeterminate	Flexed	Back	Absent	0.7	Southwest
95	Mature Adult	Female	Flexed	Back	Present	Unknown	North
96	Older Adult	Female	Flexed	Side	Absent	Unknown	North
97	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Absent	1	Unknown
98	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Present	0.9	Unknown
99	Older Adult	Female	Flexed	Side	Absent	Unknown	Northwest
100	Adolescent	Indeterminate	Flexed	Side	Absent	Unknown	South
101	Older Adult	Female	Flexed	Side	Absent	0.5	South
102	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
102a	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
103	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
104	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	1.2	North
105	Young Adult	Male	Flexed	Indeterminate	Absent	Unknown	North or Northwest
106	Mature Adult	Male	Flexed	Back	Absent	Unknown	East
107	Young Adult	Male	Flexed	Back	Absent	2	Northeast
108	Adolescent	Indeterminate	Flexed	Side	Present	1.2	East

Table 4.1. Structure 7 Burial Attributes (Continued).

Burial No.	Age Class	Sex	Burial Type	Back Position	Artifacts	Burial Depth (ft)	Burial Orientation
109	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	0.3	Northwest
109a	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
110	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Back	Absent	1.2	West
111	Child	Indeterminate	Flexed	Back	Present	0.4	Southeast
112	Adolescent	Indeterminate	Flexed	Side	Absent	1.2	Southwest
112a	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
113	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Absent	1.3	Unknown
114	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Side	Absent	Unknown	South
115	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Side	Absent	Unknown	North
116	Young Adult	Male	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
117	Mature Adult	Female	Extended	N/A	Present	Unknown	South
118a	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
118b	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
118c	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
118d	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
119	Older Adult	Female	Flexed	Back	Absent	Unknown	Southwest
120	Child	Indeterminate	Flexed	Back	Present	Unknown	Northeast
121	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Absent	1.2	North
122	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	0.7	South
123	Older Adult	Female	Flexed	Side	Present	1.5	East
124	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Absent	1.5	Northeast
124a	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
125	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Back	Present	0.6	West
125a	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
125b	Indeterminate	Unknown	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown

Preliminary Spatial Analysis

An important part of my analysis of the Structure 7 cemetery was considering the spatial distribution of the burial pits themselves, several of which contained multiple individuals. Four pits near the center of the cemetery stood out due to their large size, central location, and their unique arrangement in a square. These four pits, the largest in the cemetery, probably represent the earliest burials in the cemetery as it is unlikely that a central space would have been available to accommodate such large burial pits after the cemetery had been well-established. Considering the principles of horizontal stratigraphy, wherein cemeteries radiate outward from a founding burial over time (Parker Pearson 1999:11-15), these four pits may be the locations of founding members of the group that used the Structure 7 cemetery. Three smaller pits are located at the very center of the cemetery, within the square created by the large burial pits. It is impossible to determine whether the three small central pits were created before or after the larger four as there are no instances of superposition between the two groups.

The pits distributed outside the central area account for the majority of the burial activity in the cemetery. Again referring to the principles of horizontal stratigraphy, and assuming that the four larger pits in the central area are founding burial pits, the numerous outer pits occurred later in the lifespan of the cemetery. Theses pits radiate outward from the central area toward the structure walls, in a pinwheel-like arrangement. A few of the outer burials superimpose the domestic structure postholes, indicating that they postdate the original building (Figure 4.3). These burials touch the structure walls in three areas around the perimeter to the north, southeast, and southwest. This may signify the presence of three distinct, spatially defined groupings within the cemetery. If the central burial cluster, including the large multiple burial pits and the three smaller pits they surround, is removed, the three possible outer

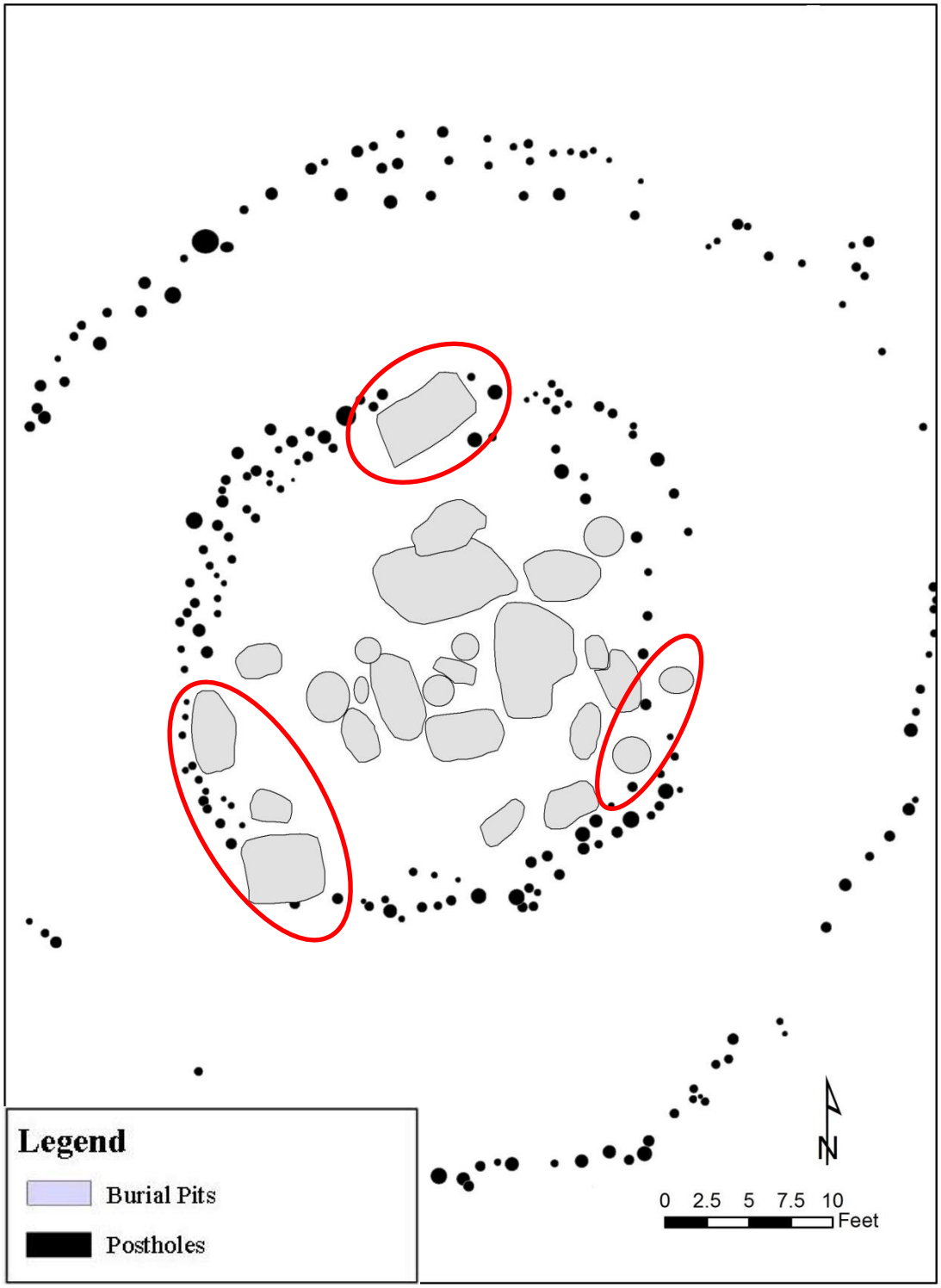

Figure 4.3. Burial pit and posthole superposition in Structure 7 (adapted from Boudreaux 2005:Figure 5.29).

groupings become more visible (Figure 4.4). Although two spatially defined groups can be identified in the central area of the cemetery, the specific boundaries of the outer three groupings are not clear based solely on visual examination. The addition of the spatial analysis of burial attributes may further define them.

Attributes Considered

I considered six attributes in my analysis of the burials within Structure 7. The burial pit depth data was gathered from the original field forms that are curated at the RLA. The comparison of these data may assist in reconstructing the burial chronology of the cemetery through stratigraphy, should there be significant differences among them. The age and sex determinations were provided by the skeletal analysis conducted through the course of the NAGPRA inventory (Davis et al. 1996). These attributes will assist in interpreting the nature of any groups identified within the cemetery. Age and sex, when combined with other attribute data, may allow insights into the importance of ascribed or achieved statuses within the Town Creek community. Data regarding associated grave goods, body positioning, and body orientation were compiled from the original excavation records by Boudreaux (2005) for his dissertation. Analyzing the spatial distribution of these attributes may assist in further defining the groups identified in the preliminary visual analysis through the presence of any clustered patterning in specific areas within the cemetery.

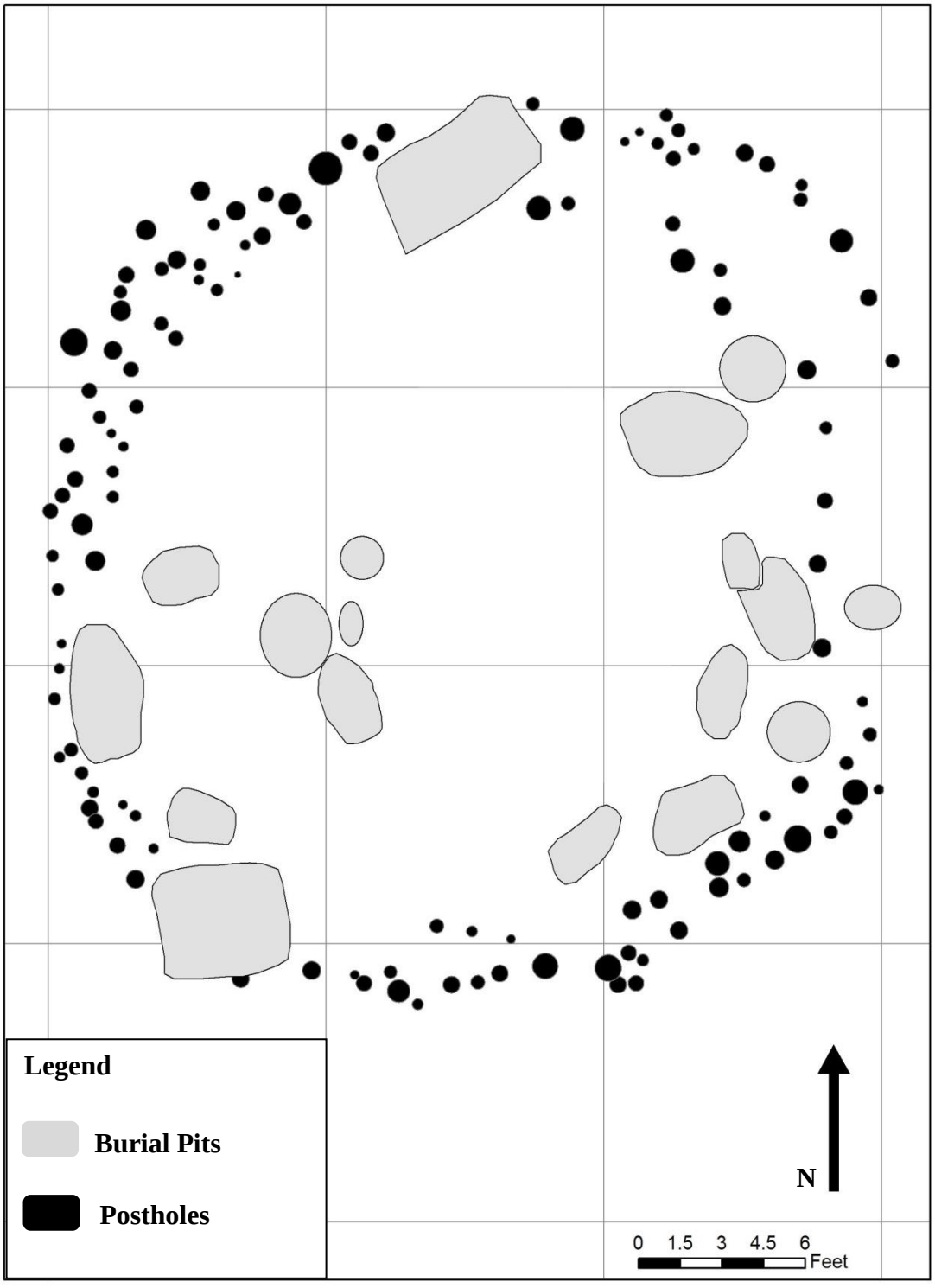

Figure 4.4. Structure 7 burial pits with central clusters removed.

Burial Depth

The depth of each burial, from original ground surface to burial pit bottom, was not recorded at the time of excavation for all interments. These data are available for 22 of the 50 burials from Structure 7. In looking at the depth range based on the data from the original burial forms, the burials within the cemetery appear to range in depth from 0.3 feet to 2 feet. Considering the average body size these pits needed to accommodate, this is not a significant variation that would lend much credence to any interpretations in regard to differentiating among groups based on burial stratigraphy. I examined the distribution of burials by depth, but there is no apparent clustering around any depth in any particular area in the cemetery.

Age

An age class was assigned to each individual in the Structure 7 cemetery based on the age approximation obtained through previous skeletal analysis (Davis et al. 1996; Driscoll 2001). Following the work of earlier analyses of native Southeastern groups (Boudreaux 2005; Driscoll 2001; Eastman 2001; Rodning 2001), I used categories that are representative of an age range: children are 5 years of age and younger, adolescents are 6 to 14 years, young adults are 15-24 years, mature adults are 25-34 years, and older adults are 35 years and older. The spatial distribution of the age classes within the cemetery is shown in Figure 4.5. In it, each interment is individually represented by a point that was color-coded to denote a specific age class. The 25 individuals (Burials 88, 91, 93, 94, 97, 98, 102, 102a, 103, 104, 109, 109a, 111, 112a, 113, 118a, 118b, 118c, 118d, 120, 121, 122, 124, 124a, and 125a) classified as children are distributed

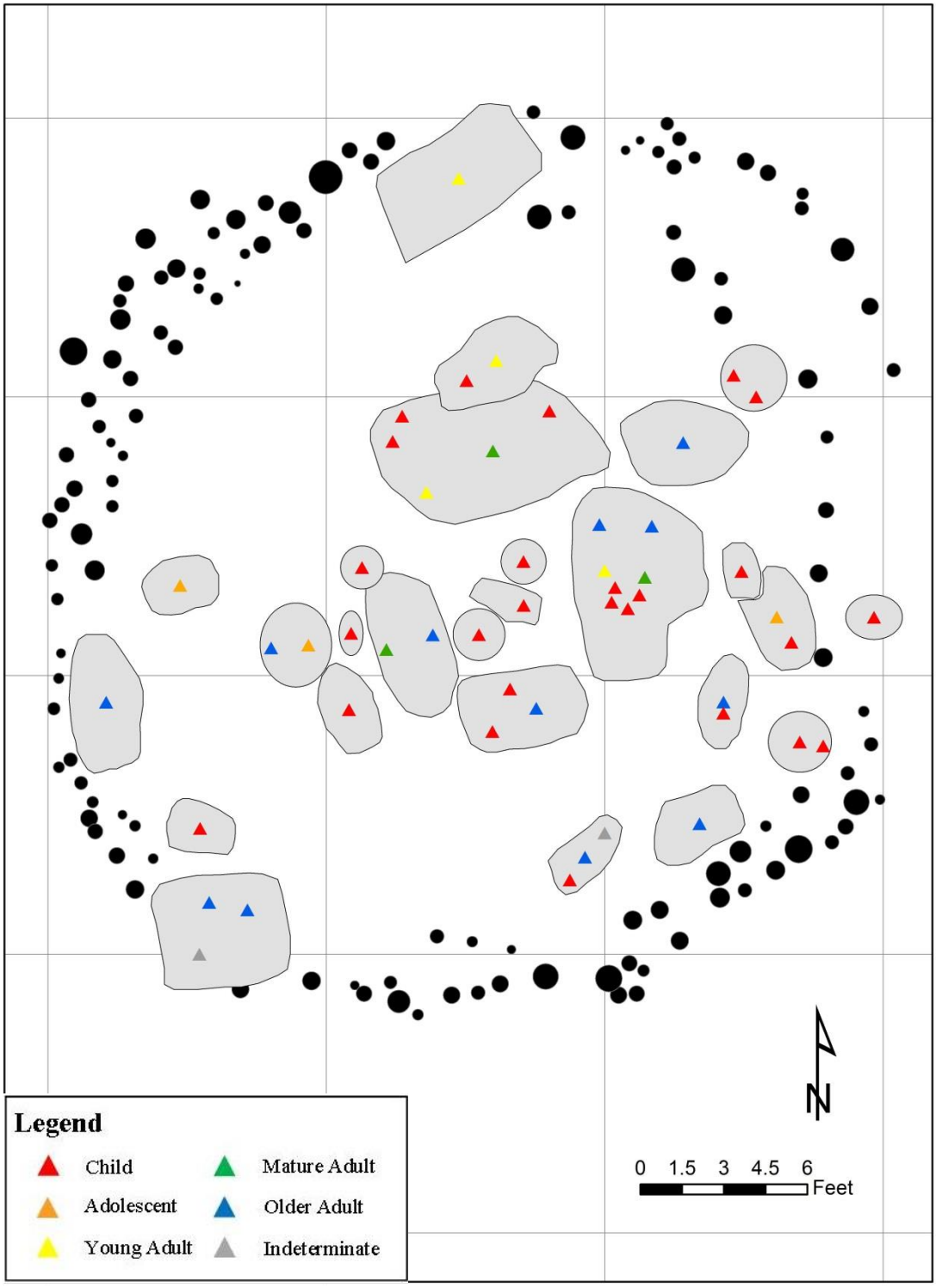

Figure 4.5. Distribution of age in the Structure 7 cemetery.

throughout the cemetery in every group. There are five instances of multiple children in one burial pit throughout the cemetery. The three small central burials are all individuals from this age category. Only three adolescents (Burials 100, 108, and 112) are found in Structure 7. These interments are found due east and west of the cemetery's center. Four young adults (Burials 90, 105, 107, and 116) are found only in the northern area of the cemetery, and three of them are contained in the northern and eastern large burial pits of the central four that form a square. Three mature adult burials (95, 106, and 117) are also found one each in the western, northern, and eastern pits of the square. Older adults are the most common of the adult class in Structure 7, with 13 individuals (Burials 86, 87, 89, 92, 96, 99, 101, 110, 114, 115, 119, 123, and 125) present. They appear to be evenly distributed in the southeastern and southwestern areas, but absent in the northern area.

Sex

Twenty-eight of the 50 individuals in the cemetery are children or adolescents whose sex could not be determined. Of the 22 adults in the cemetery, there are four young adult males (90, 105, 107, and 116), one mature adult male (106), seven older adult males (87, 89, 92, 110, 114, 115, and 125), two mature adult females (95 and 117), and six older adult females (86, 96, 99, 101, 119, and 123). The individual in Burial 87a is likely an adult, but the sex of this individual could not be determined due to the condition of the remains. All told, there are 12 individuals determined as male and eight individuals determined as female. The spatial distribution of individuals by sex within the cemetery is shown in Figure 4.6. In it, each interment is individually represented by a point that was color-coded to denote the sex of the individual. In examining the spatial distribution of the sexed adults, it can be seen that only males are present

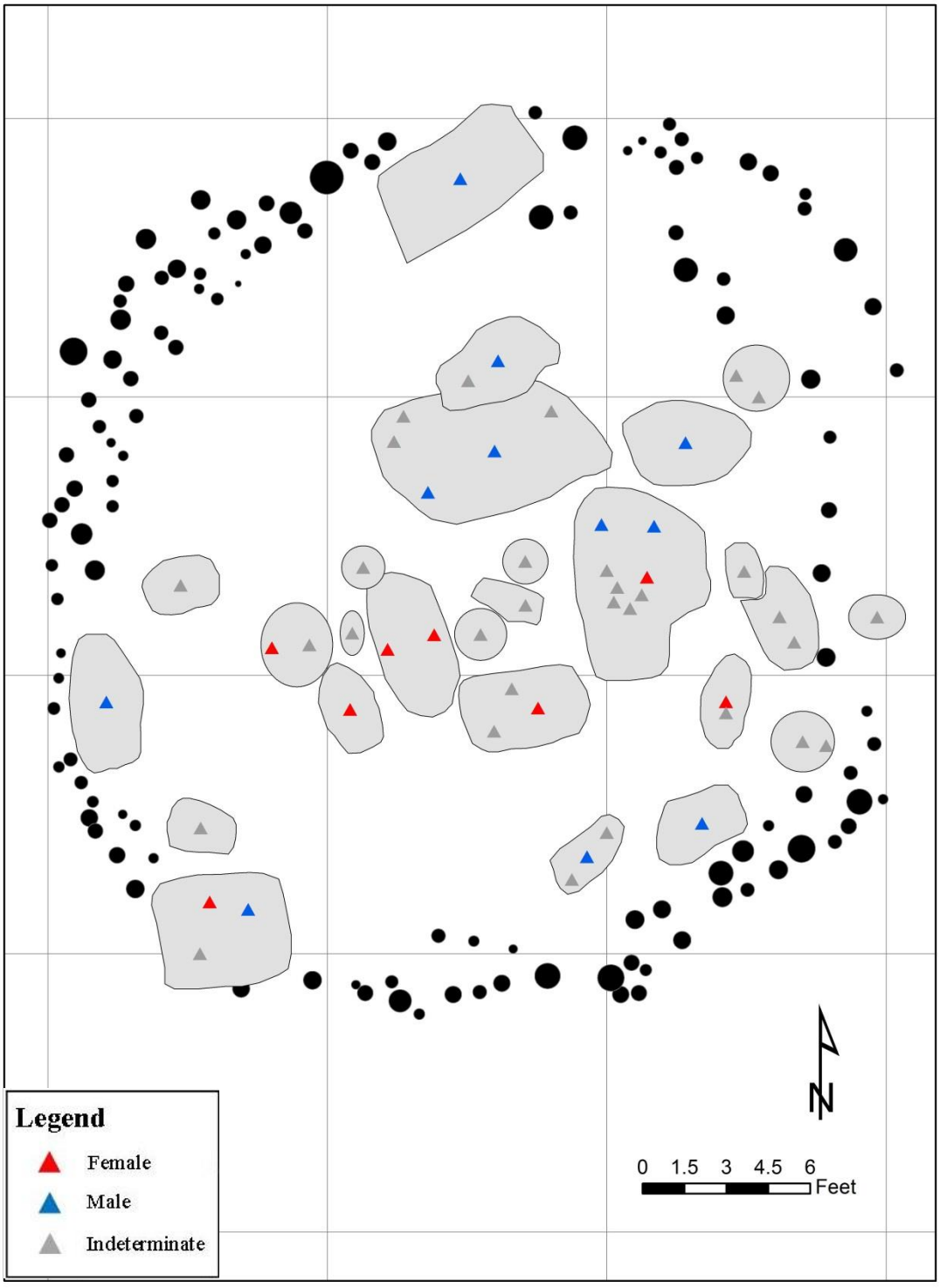

Figure 4.6 Distribution of burials by sex in the Structure 7 cemetery.

in the northern area of the cemetery, whereas the southeastern and southwestern areas contain both males and females.

Grave Goods

Ten of the 50 individuals interred in the cemetery were associated with artifacts. The spatial distribution of associated grave goods within the cemetery is shown in Figure 4.7, where each interment is represented by a color-coded point that shows the presence or absence of grave goods in the burial. In looking at the map, it can be seen that no artifacts were associated with any of the burials in the northern area of the cemetery. The southeastern and southwestern areas show a similar spatial distribution of burials with associated artifacts.

Among the 10 burial pits containing grave goods, artifacts include a bone awl, organic material burial coverings, copper fragments, ceramic vessels, shell gorgets, a celt, and a chipped stone projectile point (Table 4.2). The spatial distribution of artifact types within the cemetery is illustrated by Figure 4.8. In it, each interment is individually represented by a point that was color-coded to show the specific artifact type with which it was associated. Although few artifacts were found in association with the Structure 7 burials, their spatial distribution shows some patterning. Unique to the southwestern area is one burial with a bone awl (86), one burial with two ceramic vessels (108), and three burials with organic burial coverings (87, 89, and 95) that were identified through distinctive soil staining. The southeastern area of the cemetery is distinct from the southwestern and northern areas in that it includes two burials with shell gorgets (111 and 117), one burial with copper fragments (92), one burial with a celt (120), and one burial with a chipped stone projectile point (125), although the position of the projectile

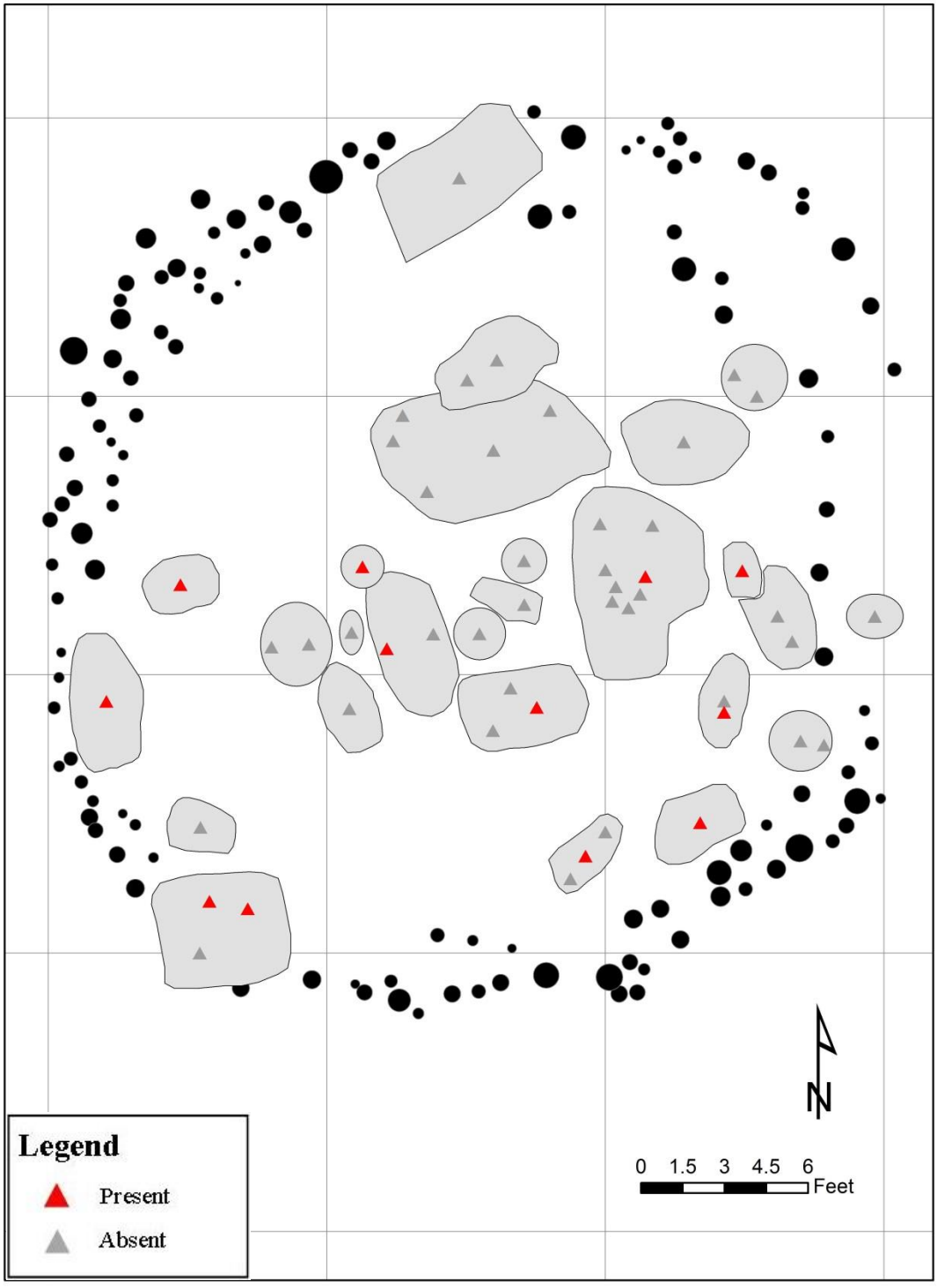

Figure 4.7. Distribution of grave goods presence in the Structure 7 cemetery.

Table 4.2 Artifact Types.

	Awl	Burial Covering	Celt	Ceramic Vessel	Copper Fragments	Projectile Point	Rock	Shell Gorget	Total
Burial									
86	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
87	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
89	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
92	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
95	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
98	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
108	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
111	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
117	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
120	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
123	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
125	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Total	1	3	1	2	1	1	4	4	17

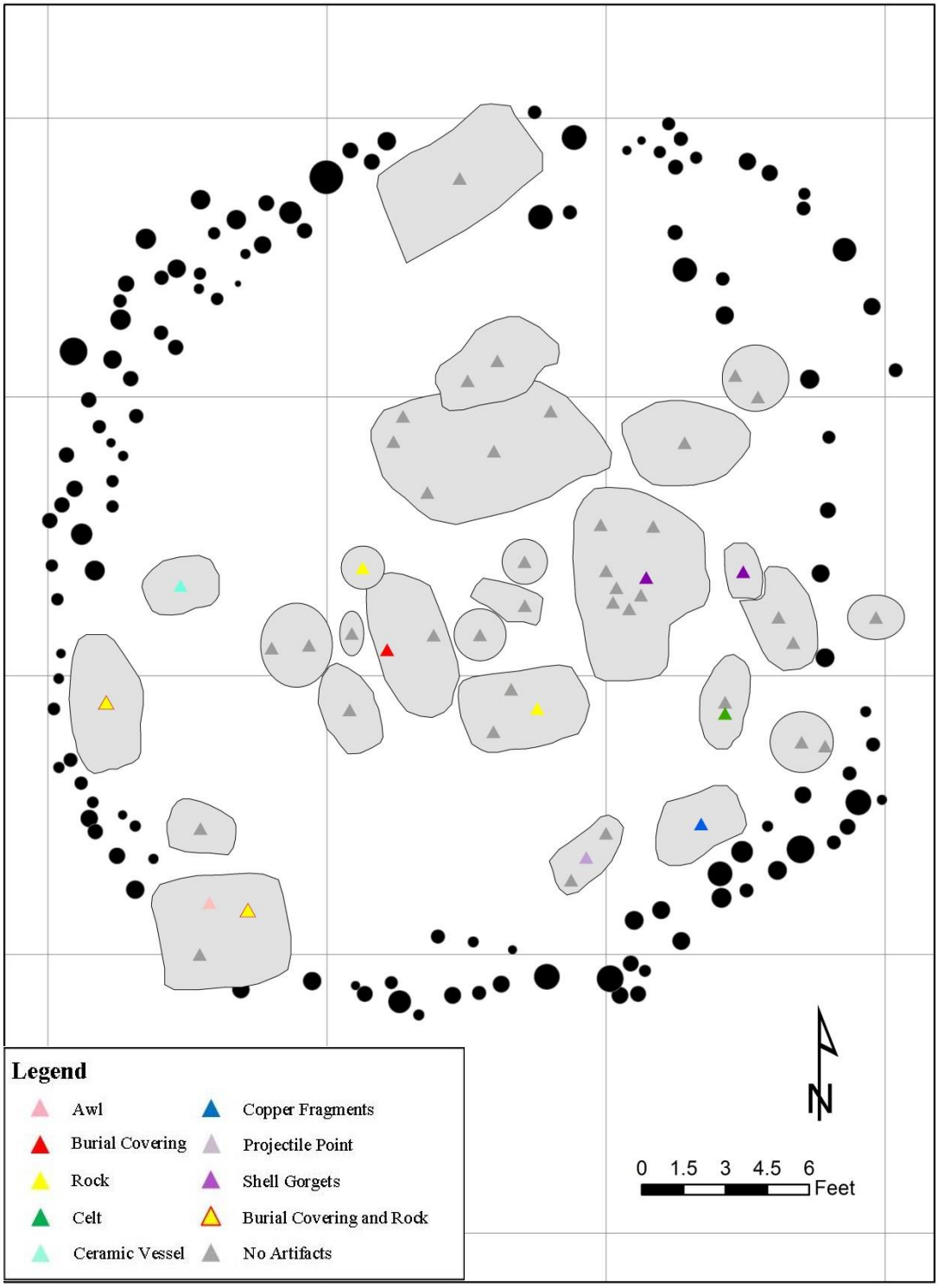

Figure 4.8. Distribution of artifact types in the Structure 7 cemetery.

point suggests it was the cause of death rather an object interred as a part of a mortuary ritual (Driscoll 2001:151). This map also illustrates the absence of any grave goods with the burials found in the northern area of the cemetery. The deliberate placement of large rocks near the heads of four individuals (97, 89, 98, and 123) in the interments was also observed during the excavation of the Structure 7 cemetery. Although these rocks do not appear to be modified, they may have had some significance in the burial ritual, so they were included in the map of associated grave goods. As can be seen, the four instances of rock inclusion are spatially clustered in the southwestern area. Nowhere else in the cemetery was this behavior observed.

Burial Position

Regarding the deliberate positioning of the body at the time of burial, 24 individuals were buried in a flexed position (87, 88, 89, 91, 92, 94, 95, 96, 99, 100, 101, 105, 106, 107, 108, 110, 111, 112, 114, 115, 119, 120, 123, and 125), three were laid out in extended positions (90, 93, and 117), seven were buried in urns (97, 98, 102a, 103, 113, 121, and 124), and burial position could not be determined for 16 individuals. The spatial distribution of body positioning within the cemetery is illustrated by Figure 4.9. In it, each burial is individually represented by a point that was color-coded to show burial position. It is clear that flexed interments are the most common in the cemetery, and they can be found in all areas. The most conspicuous clustering of similar positions is that of those interred in urns. The urn burials are concentrated in the central area of the cemetery, with urn burials being present in three of the four large burial pits in the square formation. Also, two of the three small burials (113 and 121) in the center of the square are urn interments. Extended burials are the least common position. One extended burial (90) is located in the northernmost area of the cemetery, another (117) in the easternmost large pit of the

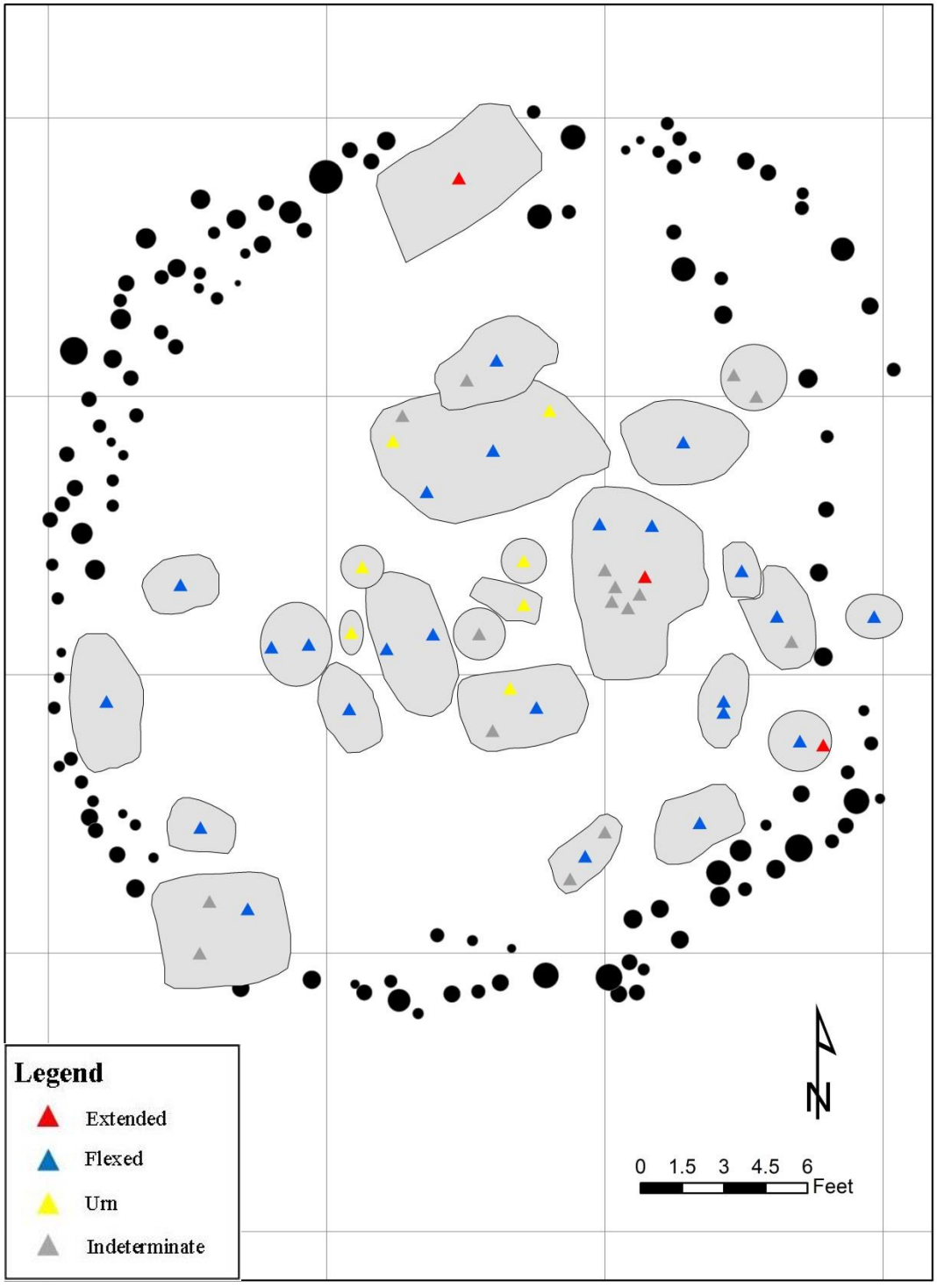

Figure 4.9. Distribution of burials by body positioning in the Structure 7 cemetery.

central square, and the third (93) is the located in the southeastern area, where it is in contact with the structure wall.

In taking a closer look at the individuals buried in flexed positions, there is some variation as to whether individuals were flexed and laid on their sides or flexed and laid on their backs. Ten of the flexed individuals (91, 94, 95, 106, 107, 110, 111, 119, 120, and 125) in the cemetery were interred directly on their backs and 12 (87, 89, 92, 96, 99, 100, 101, 108, 112, 114, 115, and 123) were interred on their side. The back position for two other burials could not be determined. This variable was also mapped (Figure 4.10). It can be seen that flexed burials positioned directly on their backs occur generally in only the northern and southeastern areas, with one occurrence in the westernmost pit of the central square. Significantly, all of the flexed burials in the northern region are positioned directly on their backs.

Burial Orientation

Of all those interred in the cemetery, five are oriented to the north, five to the northeast, two to the northwest, six to the south, two to the southeast, three to the southwest, five to the east, and four are oriented to the west. Orientation could not be determined or was not recorded for the remaining 17 burials. Coe concluded in his research that no obvious patterning was present in regard to orientation (Coe 1995:268). In the map of burial orientation (Figure 4.11), points representing each burial were color-coded to represent orientation. In looking at the map and considering the observations of disturbance throughout the notes in the original burial records, I agree with Coe's original interpretation that there is no obvious patterning in regard to burial orientation within Structure 7.

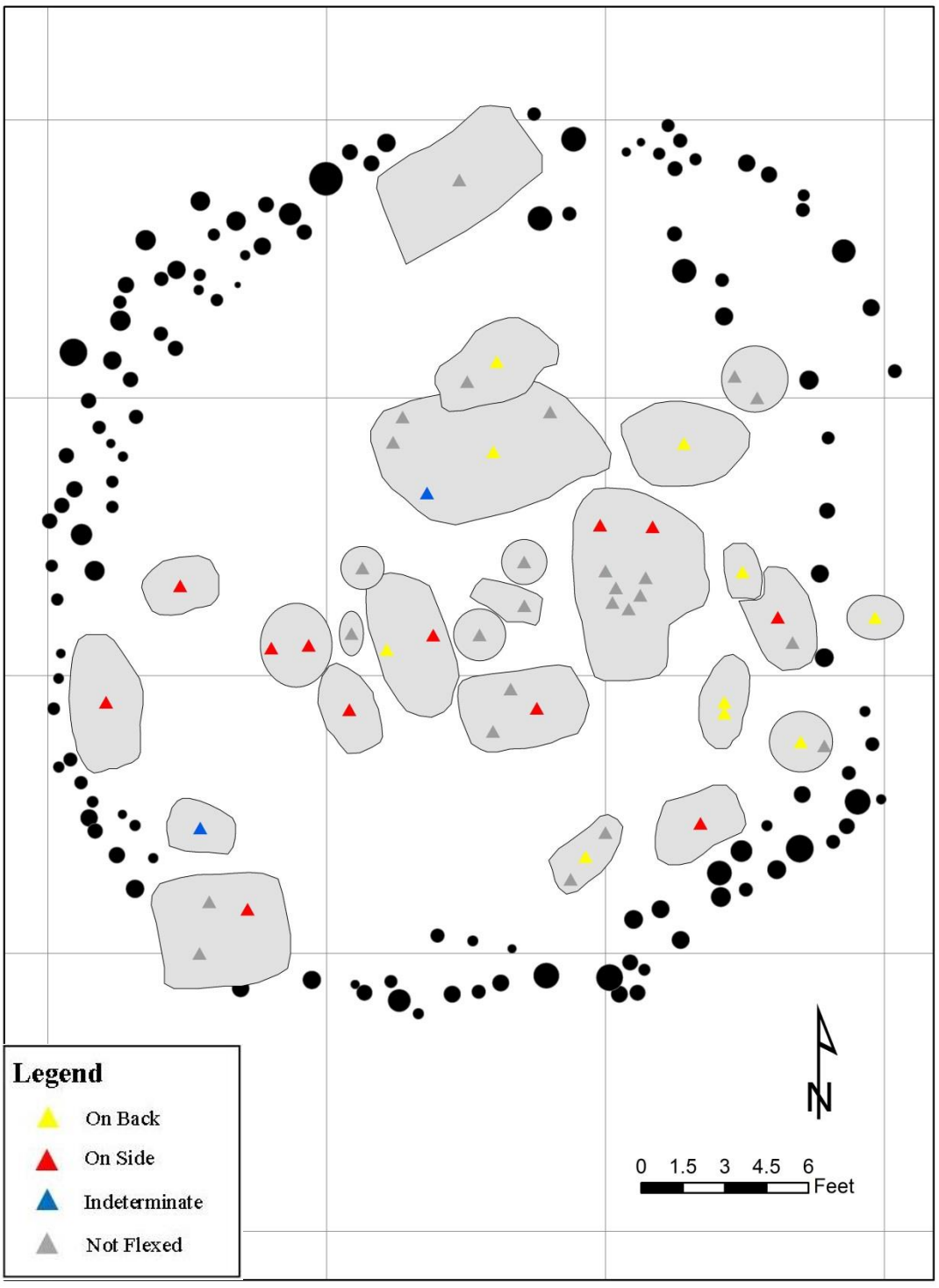

Figure 4.10. Distribution of burials by back position in flexed burials in the Structure 7 cemetery.

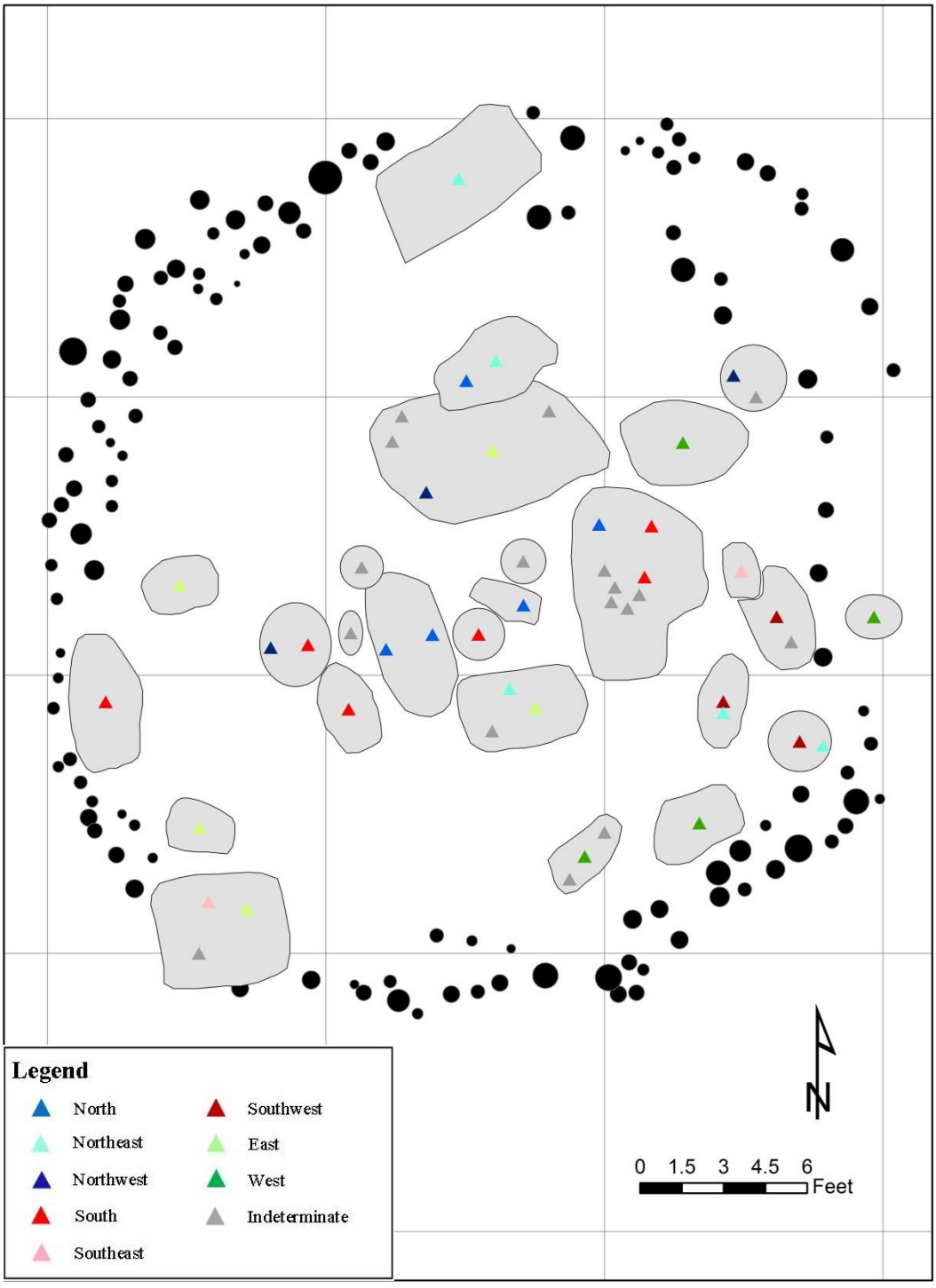

Figure 4.11. Distribution of burials by orientation in the Structure 7 cemetery.

Summary

This chapter has introduced the data used in my research and offered the results of a preliminary visual examination. This examination tentatively identified three distinct groupings within the cemetery. The spatial analyses of burial attributes including burial depth, age, sex, grave goods, body positioning, and body orientation which followed further identified cultural patterning within Structure 7. The following chapter will discuss the validity of the groupings initially identified, and discuss the significance of each burial attribute. This thesis will conclude with a discussion of the significance of my findings in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5: Discussion

A visual examination of the Structure 7 cemetery suggested the presence of multiple, spatially distinct burial groups. Additionally, the spatial distribution of burial attributes that include burial depth, age, sex, grave goods, burial positioning, and burial orientation suggests the presence of five groups within the cemetery. In this chapter, the results of the analysis presented in Chapter 4 will be used to define and discuss the burial clusters that are present in the Structure 7 cemetery. The groups are discussed regarding the burial attributes that define them, and the possible cultural significance of these attributes. I will conclude this chapter by considering the cultural significance of the Structure 7 cemetery and its role in the Town Creek community.

Burial Clusters

The following sections define each of the burial clusters identified through visual examination and the analysis of the spatial distribution of the burial attributes described in Chapter 3. The five clusters that were identified include the Central Square cluster, Central cluster, Northern cluster, Southeastern cluster, and Southwestern cluster (Table 5.1). Each will be discussed as to their defining attributes and interpreted through spatial patterning and ethnographic analogy.

Table 5.1. Structure 7 Burial Attributes by Cluster.

	Burial No.	Age Class	Sex	Burial Position	Back Position	Artifacts	Burial Depth (ft)	Burial Orientation
Central Square Cluster								
	95	Mature Adult	Female	Flexed	Back	Present	Unknown	North
	96	Older Adult	Female	Flexed	Side	Absent	Unknown	North
	102	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	102a	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	103	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	104	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	1.2	North
	105	Young Adult	Male	Flexed	Indeterminate	Absent	Unknown	North or Northwest
	106	Mature Adult	Male	Flexed	Back	Absent	Unknown	East
	107	Young Adult	Male	Flexed	Back	Absent	2	Northeast
	114	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Side	Absent	Unknown	South
	115	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Side	Absent	Unknown	North
	116	Young Adult	Male	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	117	Mature Adult	Female	Extended	N/A	Present	Unknown	South
	118a	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	118b	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	118c	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	118d	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	123	Older Adult	Female	Flexed	Side	Present	1.5	East
	124	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Absent	1.5	Northeast
	124a	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
Central Cluster								
	113	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Absent	1.3	Unknown
	121	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Absent	1.2	North
	122	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	0.7	South

Table 5.1. Structure 7 Burial Attributes by Cluster (Continued).

	Burial No.	Age Class	Sex	Burial Position	Back Position	Artifacts	Burial Depth (ft)	Burial Orientation
Northern Cluster								
	90	Young Adult	Male	Extended	N/A	Absent	0.8	Northeast
	102	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	102a	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	103	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	104	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	1.2	North
	105	Young Adult	Male	Flexed	Indeterminate	Absent	Unknown	North or Northwest
	106	Mature Adult	Male	Flexed	Back	Absent	Unknown	East
	107	Young Adult	Male	Flexed	Back	Absent	2	Northeast
Southeastern Cluster								
	91	Child	Indeterminate	Flexed	Back	Absent	0.9	West
	92	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Side	Present	1.9	West
	93	Child	Indeterminate	Extended	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Northeast
	94	Child	Indeterminate	Flexed	Back	Absent	0.7	southwest
	109	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	0.3	Northwest
	109a	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	110	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Back	Absent	1.2	West
	111	Child	Indeterminate	Flexed	Back	Present	0.4	Southeast
	112	Adolescent	Indeterminate	Flexed	Side	Absent	1.2	Southwest
	112a	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	114	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Side	Absent	Unknown	South
	115	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Side	Absent	Unknown	North
	116	Young Adult	Male	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	117	Mature Adult	Female	Extended	N/A	Present	Unknown	South
	118a	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown

Table 5.1. Structure 7 Burial Attributes by Cluster (Continued).

	Burial No.	Age Class	Sex	Burial Position	Back Position	Artifacts	Burial Depth (ft)	Burial Orientation
	118b	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	118c	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	118d	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	119	Older Adult	Female	Flexed	Back	Absent	Unknown	Southwest
	120	Child	Indeterminate	Flexed	Back	Present	Unknown	Northeast
	125	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Back	Present	0.6	West
	125a	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	125b	Indeterminate	Unknown	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
Southwestern Cluster								
	86	Older Adult	Female	Indeterminate	N/A	Present	Unknown	Southeast
	87	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Side	Present	Unknown	East
	87a	Adult	Indeterminate	No Data	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown
	88	Child	Indeterminate	Flexed	Indeterminate	Absent	1.6	East
	89	Older Adult	Male	Flexed	Side	Present	1.4	South
	95	Mature Adult	Female	Flexed	Back	Present	Unknown	North
	96	Older Adult	Female	Flexed	Side	Absent	Unknown	North
	97	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Absent	1	Unknown
	98	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Present	0.9	Unknown
	99	Older Adult	Female	Flexed	Side	Absent	Unknown	Northwest
	100	Adolescent	Indeterminate	Flexed	Side	Absent	Unknown	Sout
	101	Older Adult	Female	Flexed	Side	Absent	0.5	South
	108	Adolescent	Indeterminate	Flexed	Side	Present	1.2	East
	123	Older Adult	Female	Flexed	Side	Present	1.5	East
	124	Child	Indeterminate	Urn	N/A	Absent	1.5	Northeast
	124a	Child	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	N/A	Absent	Unknown	Unknown

Central Square Cluster

The four large, elongated burial pits that make up the Central Square cluster are located in the center of the cemetery, and they are arranged in a rectilinear shape (Figure 5.1). The four pits contain Burials 102, 102a, 103, 104, 105, 106, and 107 in the northern pit; 114, 115, 116, 117, 118a, 118b, 118c, and 118d in the eastern pit; 123, 124, and 124a in the southern pit; and 95 and 96 in the western pit.

Defining Attributes

The Central Square cluster was identified through a visual examination of the cemetery. The large pits were distinct from the surrounding pits due to their size, central location, and deliberate arrangement in a square formation. Also, each of the pits contains multiple individuals.

Interpretation

The central location of this formation likely indicates these burials as among the first interred within the Structure 7 cemetery. Had they been buried after the cemetery was well-established, it is unlikely a central space would be available for a large, deliberate burial arrangement. At some other Mississippian sites, the square shape, which can be representative of native social organization, has been replicated architecturally and in site arrangement (Hally 2008:522-523; Hudson 1976:220-221; King 2010:63-65). Those interred in this central, probably symbolically important formation are likely significant members of the social group or groups that used the Structure 7 cemetery. The placement of these individuals in their own distinctive cluster may indicate their membership in a sub-group within the larger social group that consisted of leaders

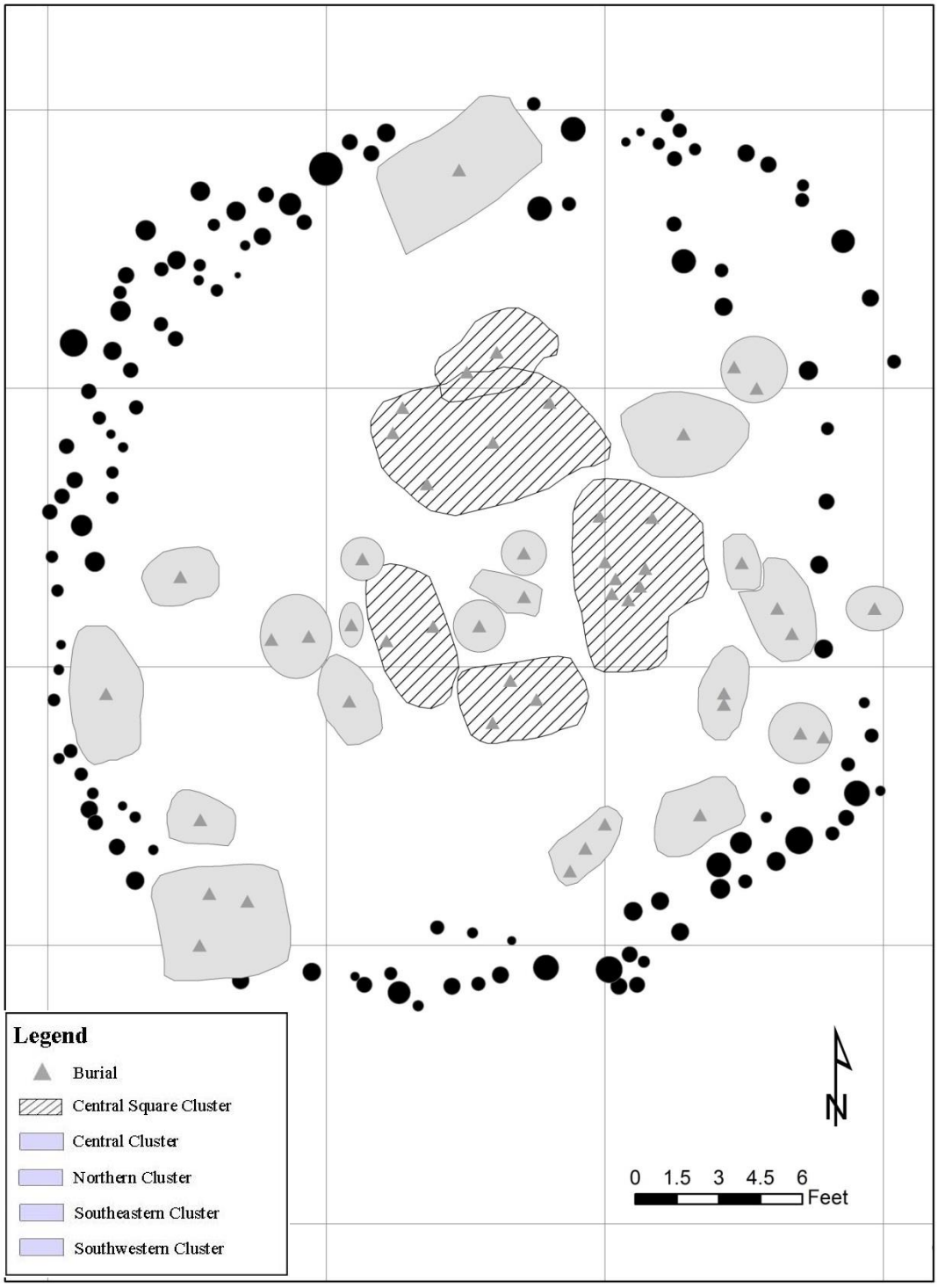

Figure 5.1. The Central Square cluster.

or others that held significance for the entire faction. This sub-group may be represented by the Central Square cluster. The burials of these individuals are conspicuous in that they are large and contain multiple individuals. It is unclear whether only one individual per pit was the main significant burial or if all interred in the same pit were of equal social standing as the burial behaviors and attributes in each of the four pits varies.

Central Cluster

The Central cluster consists of Burials 113, 121, and 122 (Figure 5.2). The burial pits of the Central Square cluster are distinguished from the Central cluster in that the latter burials are single pits that do not contain multiple individuals. Although already delineated within the cemetery by the Central Square cluster, the Central cluster burials also share other significant burial attributes that further define them as a discrete group.

Defining Attributes

The burial attributes of age, grave goods, and burial position help to further define the Central cluster as a discrete grouping (see Table 5.1). Although this cluster is small, its spatial isolation from the other burials in the cemetery supports the significance of the attribute commonalities among these burials. All of the individuals included in the Central cluster are children in single burial pits. This is distinctive in that they are surrounded by large, multiple-individual burials that contain remains of individuals of all age classes. In addition, none of the Central cluster burials were found associated with any grave goods. Finally, two of the three burials in the cluster were interred in burial urns.

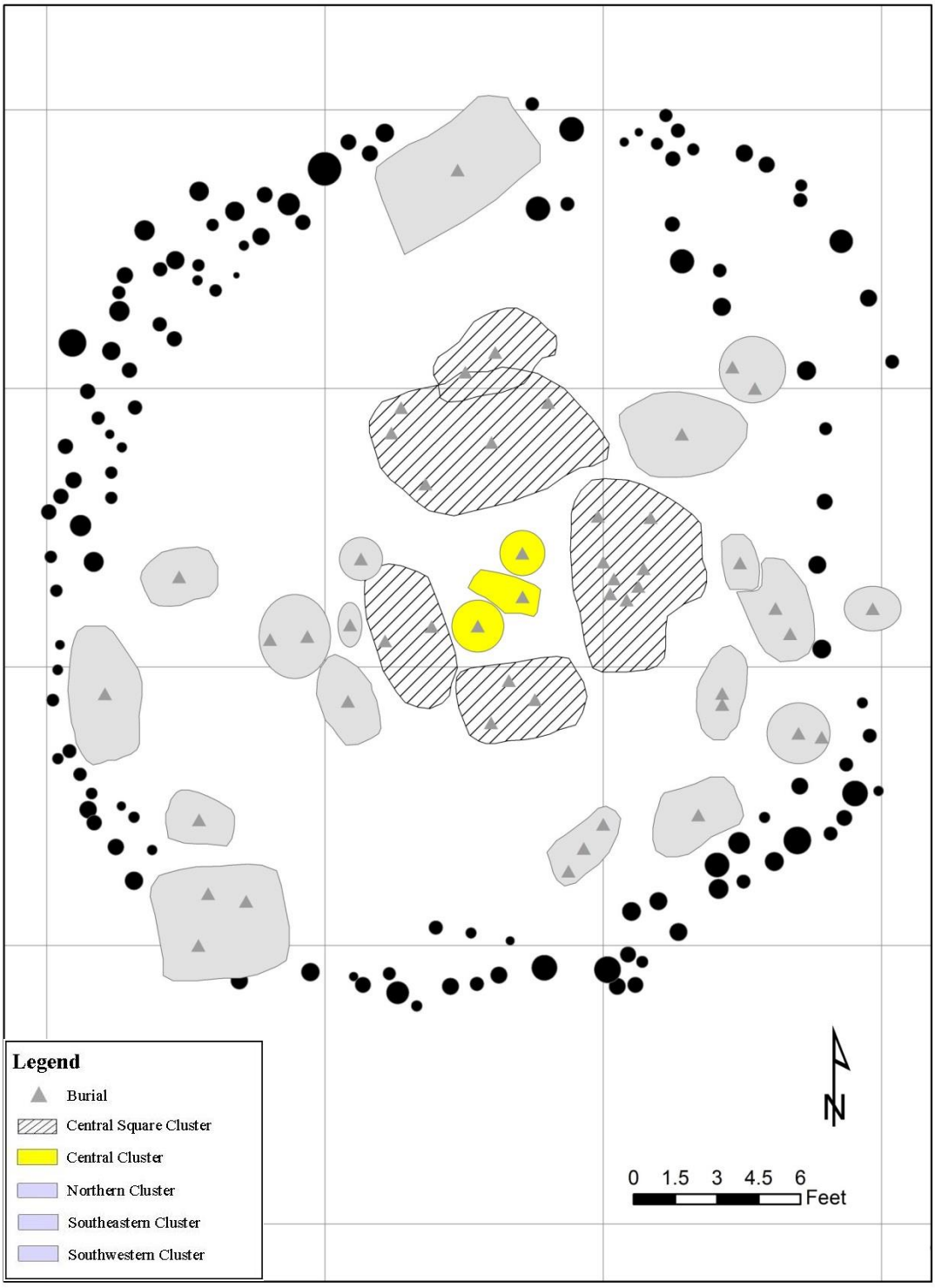

Figure 5.2. The Central cluster.

Interpretation

The ages represented in a burial population can greatly assist in interpreting the nature of a social grouping (Hally 2008:497-519; Howell and Kintigh 1996:541-542). As only one age class, children, is represented in the Central cluster, it is unlikely the cluster is representative of a kin-based faction, which is generally represented by the presence of multiple age classes (Marcoux 2010:146, 150, 160; Wilson et al. 2010:83). To determine whether the group held some other social significance, its other attributes can be examined. Assuming this is not a kin-based cluster, it is curious who would have carried out this behavior, as these three children could not have buried each other. The inclusion of artifacts in interments is a way in which people personalize burials (Cushman 1962[1899]:404; Hudson 1976:335-336; Swanton 1931:183), but no grave goods were included with any of the Central cluster burials. Whoever buried the three children of the Central cluster left no physical evidence of personal attachment that has been preserved. There is little, if no, evidence of personal or familial connections associated with these interments. The lack of personalization and the distinguished nature of their interment—their central location and the placement of two of them in urns—indicate that the Central cluster served a ritual function. Perhaps the individuals of the Central cluster were interred as burial offerings, rather than as burials in their own right. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the burial event or events that resulted in the deposition of these burials may have occurred around the same time as the burial pits of the Central Square cluster surrounding them, or at any time up until the cemetery ceased to be used. The unique and deliberate boundary created by the burials of the Central Square cluster may signify some cultural, perhaps ritual, significance. Ethnographically and ethnohistorically, the space at the center of a square

arrangement of culturally significant features was a sacred space within which groups could perform rituals to connect with the Upper World (King 2010:61-62; Reilly 2004:127).

Northern Cluster

The Northern cluster recognized in the preliminary visual analysis of the cemetery consists of eight burials including 90, 102, 102a, 103, 104, 105, 106, and 107 (see Table 5.1; Figure 5.3). In assessing the horizontal stratigraphy of the cluster, the northern pit of the Central Square cluster serves as the foundation of the Northern cluster, as later burials extend to the North and end in the superposition of one burial (90) over the postholes of the original structure (see Figure 4.3). The multiple-burial pit contains seven individuals (Burials 102-107), the other member of the Northern cluster is buried to the north of the large multiple burial (Burial 90). Although the spatial proximity and conspicuous placement in the northern direction assist in defining the Northern cluster, the spatial analysis of specific burial attributes further reinforced the relation of these burials to each other.

Defining Attributes

The demographic data for each individual in the cluster are distinctive in that only children of indeterminable sex and adult males are present. One of the adult males was interred in an extended position (90), distinguishing this set of remains from most at the cemetery. Two urns, three flexed, and two indeterminate burials are also included in the grouping. Artifacts were not included with any of the interments. Those burials for which the burial orientation was provided were generally oriented to the north or northeast, with one individual oriented due east.

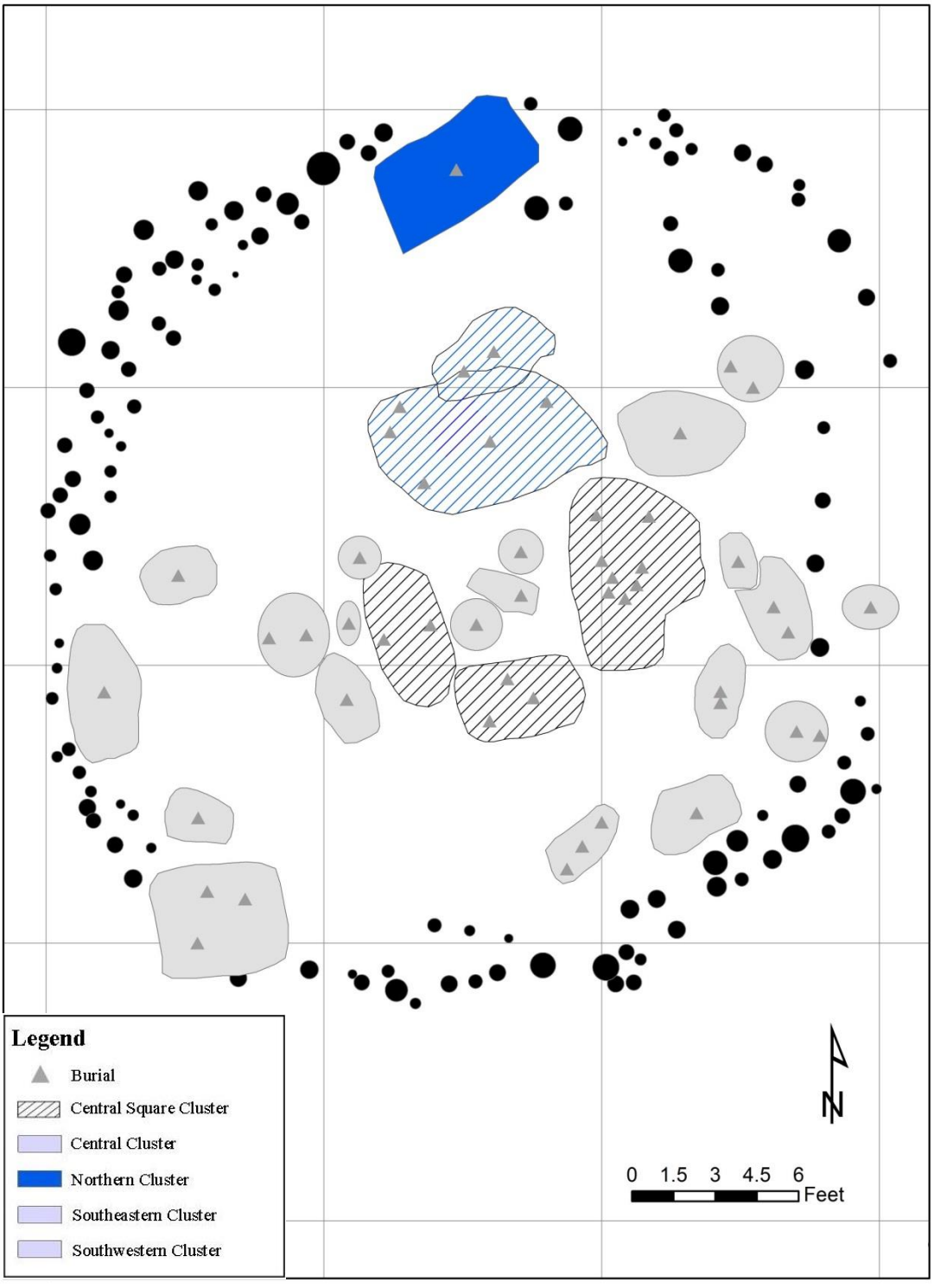

Figure 5.3. The Northern cluster.

Interpretation

The Northern cluster is distinctive from other groups in that it includes only children and relatively young adult males. Although these children may have been the offspring of the adult males, females are completely absent, and kin groups are generally defined by the presence of both sexes and all age categories (Hally 2008:497-519; Howell and Kintigh 1996:541-542; Marcoux 2010:146, 150, 160; Wilson et al. 2010:83). Based on the demographic data, this cluster may be representative of an alternative social grouping. In referring to the ethnographic record, positions of political power were reserved for younger adult males (Hudson 1976:223-226; Swanton 1931:96-99; 1970:374-375; 2006:41-44). Thus, the children in the Northern cluster may have been placed with the younger adult males as ritual elements, rather than as separate interments. Within the large burial pit, the males seem to be paired with the children. Burial 107, a young adult male, occupies the northern area of the pit and the remains of Burial 104, a child, are placed above his knees. Burials 102 and 102a, both children, seem to coincide with the interment of the adult male Burial 106 as they are both placed near his feet. Burial 103, a child, and Burial 105, a young adult male, are comingled, and the remains of both can be found near the head and feet of Burial 106.

The individuals for which orientation was determined at the time of excavation show a pattern of northern to eastern orientations. No individuals in the Northern cluster were oriented toward the south or west, as members of neighboring clusters were. The Northern cluster is also characterized by the presence of extended Burial 90. This burial is the northernmost, not only in the cluster, but in the entire cemetery. The extended position is the most uncommon among burials in the cemetery; there are only two others in another area, which suggests that this individual held some significant position in the group. The conspicuous placement of Burial 90

at the northernmost point also alludes to his distinctive status. The burials contained in the large pit also include two urns. The flexed position burials also are significant in this cluster in that all of the individuals were deliberately interred on their backs. Ethnohistoric research has shown that extra effort was expended in order to achieve this position, and it therefore may be further evidence of significant social status (Moore 1915:182-183). That none of the burials within the cluster include grave goods further distinguishes this grouping. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, grave goods functioned in the burial process to personalize the burial (Cushman 1962[1899]:404; Hudson 1976:335-336; Swanton 1931:183). The lack of symbolic burial furniture among the burials and the absence of females in this cluster are again indicative of a non kin-based grouping.

Of interest is the burial behavior within the large burial pit containing the remains of Burials 102-107. Assuming that younger adult males were paired with children, the remains of Burials 103 and 105 were likely paired before they became comingled. That the mixed remains of these individuals are found at the head and feet of Burial 106 suggests that they originally occupied the space and were displaced to accommodate the interment of Burial 106 (Figure 5.4). This displacement behavior is found nowhere else within the cemetery. That interred remains were deliberately disturbed and displaced to accommodate another burial suggests that the burial location, its displaced occupant, and its articulated occupant held some social significance as the physical location was chosen for one set of remains and then reused for another individual with similar demographic characteristics (Wilson et al. 2010:86-87).

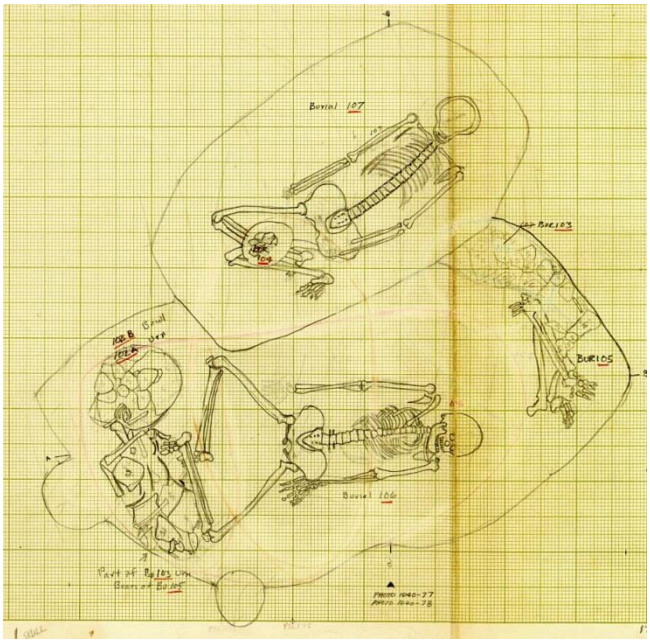

Figure 5.4. Field drawing of Burials 102-107 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

Ethnohistoric information from Southeastern Indian groups suggests that individuals interred in the northern portion of the Structure 7 cemetery may have held politically esteemed positions in the Town Creek community during their lives. According to historic Cherokee accounts, the northern direction was associated with trouble, power, and dream states – all likely cultural elements encountered by social leaders in life (Hudson 1976:132). Also, the cluster's founding burial pit serves as the northern side of the square ground formation. According to ethnographic analogy, the northern seat around the square ground in meetings and rituals was occupied by group leaders and warriors (Hudson 1976:224). As the Northern cluster members who lived long enough to reach adulthood are all males, their placement in the northern area of the cemetery may indicate that they held politically esteemed positions in life. The children interred with these socially significant males may then represent burial offerings. Alternatively, they could be the remains of young individuals who were in the line of succession for particular

social positions, but died early. Such an interpretation would suggest that an ascribed status structure operated in the Town Creek community, a possibility that will be discussed later in this chapter.

In summary, the Northern cluster occupies the northern portion of the Structure 7 cemetery, and it consists exclusively of adult males and children. None of the burials are associated with grave goods. The northern direction is ethnohistorically linked to social and political power, and the representation of adult males in the Northern group resembles a political group. The burial behavior exhibited in the large multiple burial pit is further suggestive of the pit occupying a socially or culturally significant location.

Southeastern Cluster

The Southeastern cluster was identified in the preliminary visual analysis of the cemetery, but its boundaries remained ambiguous until the completion of the spatial analysis of certain burial attributes. The Southeastern cluster is the largest identified in this analysis, consisting of 23 burials (Burials 91, 92, 93, 94, 109, 109a, 110, 111, 112, 112a, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118a, 118b, 118c, 118d, 119, 120, 125, 125a, and 125b) (Figure 5.5). In considering the cluster's horizontal stratigraphy, the eastern pit of the Central Square cluster serves as the foundation of the Southeastern cluster. It is a multiple burial pit containing the remains of eight individuals. The other burials included within the Southeastern cluster spread outward to the north, east, and south of that pit toward the walls of Structure 7.

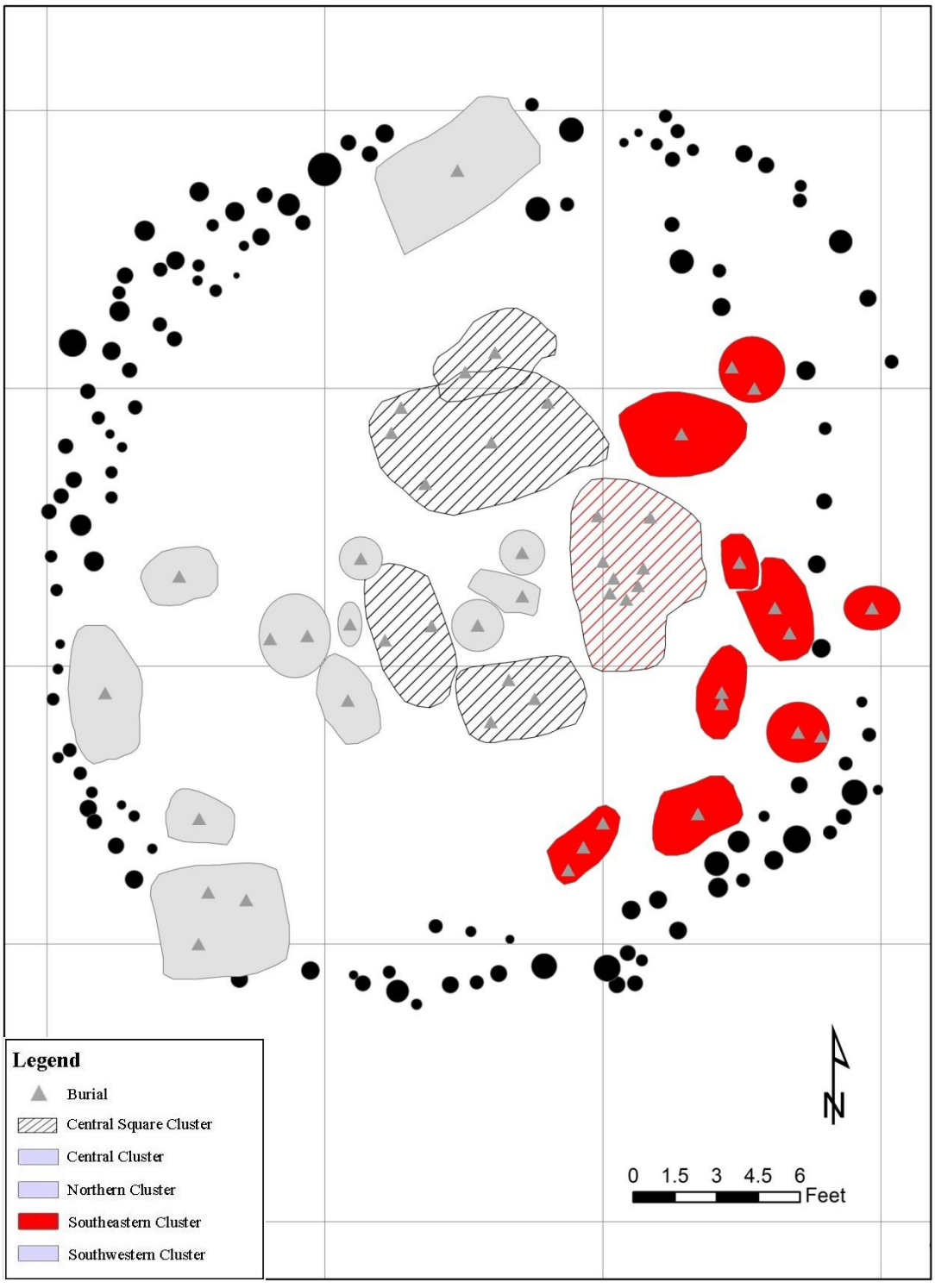

Figure 5.5. The Southeastern cluster.

Defining Attributes

Several attributes were found to be significant in defining the boundaries of the Southeastern cluster (see Table 5.1). Individuals of multiple age categories and both sexes are present, but children of indeterminable sex account for half of the group. Also included among the population are six adult males of varying age and two relatively older adult females. Most individuals within the cluster were buried in a flexed position, but two extended burials also were present. Grave goods were associated with five of the burials in the Southeastern cluster. The associated artifacts included two burials with shell gorgets, one burial associated with copper fragments, another with a celt, and one with a chipped stone projectile point.

Interpretation

In the Southeastern cluster, individuals of all ages and both sex categories are represented. It can be thus be inferred, that those interred in this cluster are from a common kin group (Marcoux 2010:160; Wilson et al. 2010:77-83), although certain kinds of group members are better represented than others. The burials associated with more distinctive burial attributes, which will be discussed later, may represent familial representatives, leaders, or founders.

Among the 23 burials within the Southeastern cluster, less variability is found between individuals than in the Central and Northern clusters. Although urn burials are found throughout the cemetery in all other clusters, none are found in the Southeastern cluster. This may be due to this particular group's mortuary behavior, or no children were used as burial offerings in this cluster. The majority of the burials were interred in flexed positions. Six of these were buried on their backs, as seen in the Northern cluster. As that burial position took some effort to achieve (Moore 1915:182-183), those individuals may have held more significant social positions than

the others. Two of the burials that had determinable positions were interred in an extended position. One of these individuals was a child, Burial 93, whose burial pit was placed at the very eastern wall of the structure. Assuming that those interred in the Southeastern cluster were members of a kin group, the distinctive, extended position of Burial 93 may be indicative of a status related to social or political power. If so, this child would not have been able to achieve such status during their short lifetime. The other extended burial is found within the large multiple-burial pit that serves as both the eastern side of the Central Square cluster and the foundation burial for the Southeastern cluster's horizontal stratigraphy. The remains are those of a mature adult female, Burial 117. At her side are the remains of two older adult males. Superimposed over Burial 117 are the remains of one young adult male and the fragmentary and comingled remains of four children (Figure 5.6). Burial 117's extended position and association with two shell gorgets implicated her remains as the focal burial among those included in the pit, as the other burials are not extended, nor are they associated with any grave goods. As many Southeastern native groups were matrilinneally organized (Knight 1990:10), and because this cluster has been interpreted as kin-based, it is possible that Burial 117 represents the remains of a matriarch or significant female figure within the group. The other individuals in the pit, especially those of the children, could be her biological relations. Also, notably, at least four individuals, Burials 91, 92, 110, and 125, are oriented due west. In no other area throughout the cemetery are burials oriented in this direction. Referring to historic Cherokee belief systems, the western direction was associated with death (Hudson 1976:224). The orientation of these sets of remains in this culturally significant direction may imply an added dimension of ceremonial practice in the burial behaviors surrounding these interments.

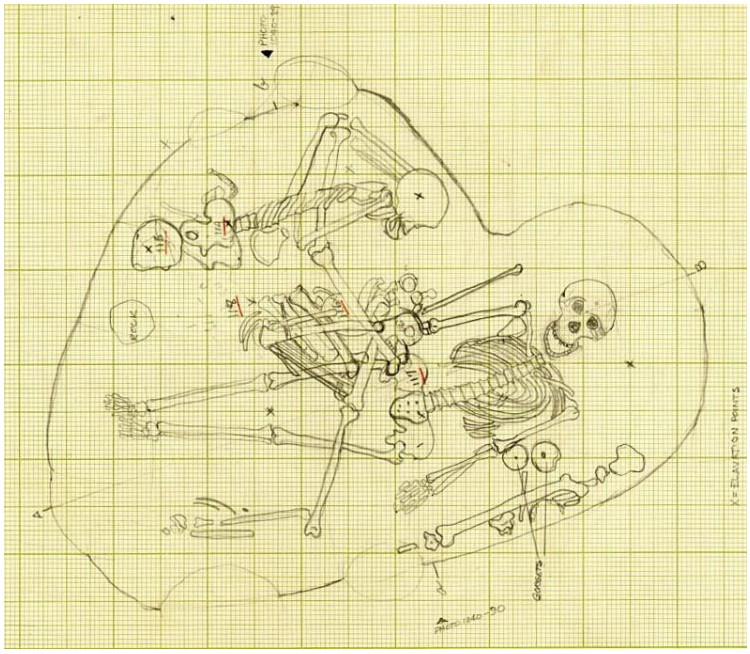

Figure 5.6. Field drawing of Burials 114-118d (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

The presence of unique grave goods among the burials in the Southeastern cluster also helped to distinguish it from other clusters in the Structure 7 cemetery. Shell gorgets similar to those with Burial 117 were associated with Burial 111, the remains of a child. Similar to Burial 93, the distinctive treatment of Burial 111 may indicate some association with social or political status, but this individual also was too young to have achieved such status by the time of their death. Also found within the Southeastern cluster are two other burials with unique artifacts. Burial 92, an older adult male, is associated with copper fragments, and Burial 120, a child, was interred with a celt. Neither of these individuals would likely have used the objects with which they were buried in everyday life, so it is a reasonable interpretation that these artifacts were included as ceremonial symbols. These inclusions distinguish these individuals from others within the cluster as socially significant members of the group. The remains of Burial 125, an older adult male, were associated with a chipped stone projectile point, but it is not interpreted here as a grave

offering. Instead, it was found lodged among the individual's vertebrae, and it likely was the cause of death (Driscoll 2001:151-152).

In summary, the demographic data indicate that those included in the Southeastern cluster in the Structure 7 cemetery are part of a kin-based group. Historic period Southeastern Indian groups often were organized by clan, and each clan consisted of multiple kin-based groups or lineages (Hudson 1976:213-218; Knight 1990:6, 2010:358-360). It is possible that the Southeastern cluster represents one such lineage, and a socially significant one. Two of the 23 individuals were found in extended burials positions, and I was able to identify three instances of ascribed status behavior in the burial treatment of children in body positioning and artifact inclusions. Further, the association of unique and ceremonial artifacts with several of the burials is indicative of personal attention to the interments. None of the grave goods found in the Southeastern cluster were found anywhere else in the Structure 7 cemetery. The distribution of burial attribute patterning separated the Southeastern cluster from the others spatially, but the specific details of each attribute led to its interpretation as a kin group.

Southwestern Cluster

The presence of a Southwestern cluster was noted during the preliminary visual analysis of the Structure 7 cemetery, although its boundaries were undefined until a detailed spatial analysis of certain burial attributes was completed. After the analysis, the cluster was found to consist of 16 interments that included Burials 86, 87, 87a, 88, 89, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 108, 123, 124, and 124a (Figure 5.7).

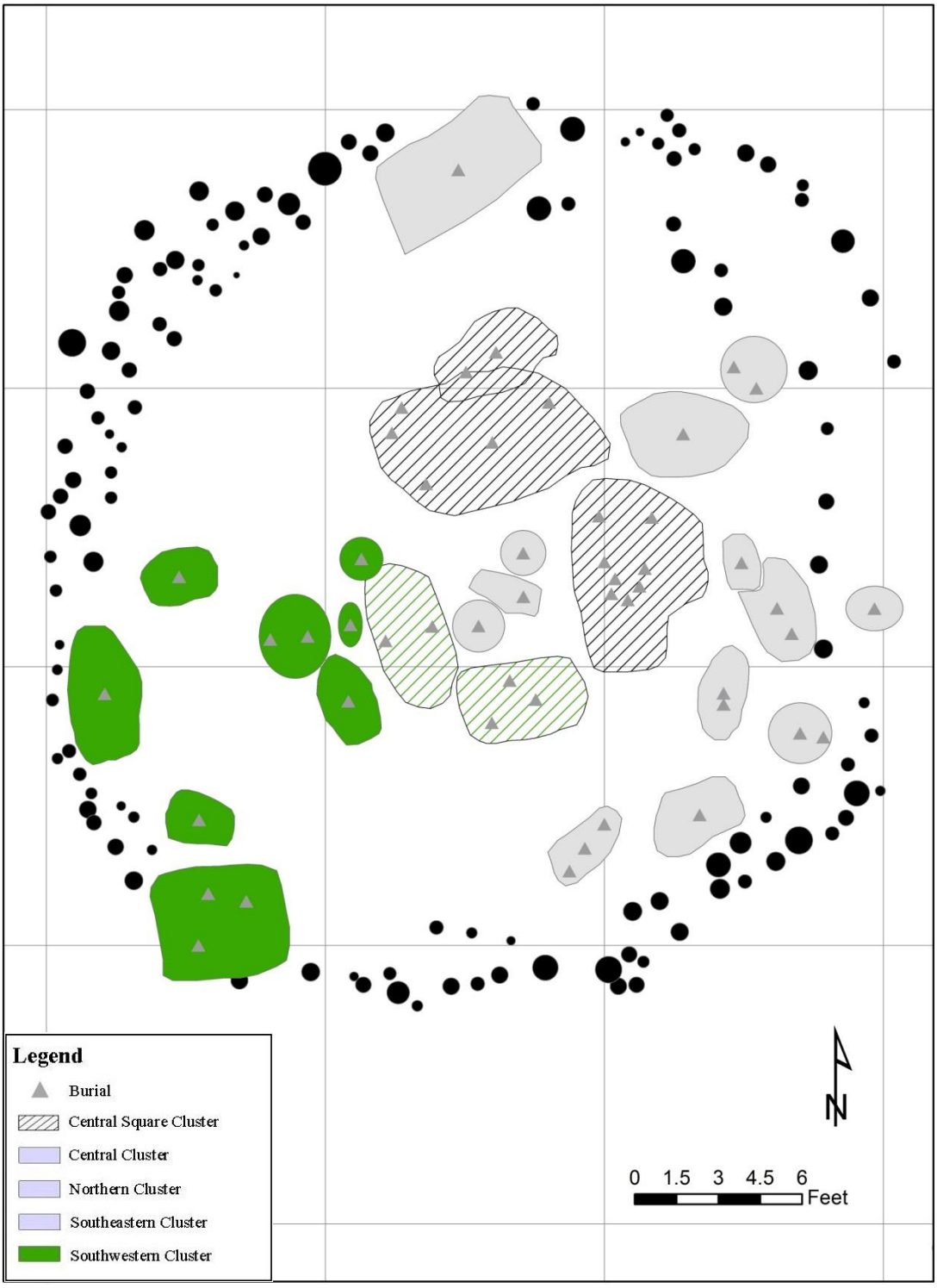

Figure 5.7. The Southwestern cluster.

Defining Attributes

As was the case with the Southeastern cluster, the Southwestern cluster contains individuals from multiple age groups and both sexes (see Table 5.1). Subadults, both children and adolescents, of indeterminable sex account for nearly half of the cluster population. Adults, which include six females and two males, are generally older. There is little variation in burial position in this cluster, as 10 of the group members were interred in flexed positions and two were interred in urns. The remaining individuals were in indeterminate positions. Grave goods were also found that are unique to the Southwestern cluster. Three burials included burial coverings, one burial included a bone awl, and one burial was associated with two ceramic vessels. Large rocks were also included in four of the burials. Although the rocks do not appear to be modified, their deliberate placement in the burial context is indicative of their cultural significance.

Interpretation

The Southwestern cluster appears to be similar to the Southeastern group in that they both include children as well as adult males and adult females. Younger adults are not present in the Southwestern group. The inclusion of all demographic categories within the Southwestern cluster is consistent with its having been a kin-based group. As seen in the Southeastern cluster, some individuals received distinctive burial treatments that suggest they may have held significant positions within the group. Two sides of the Central Square cluster serve as both the eastern boundary and foundation burials of the Southwestern cluster. Both of these are large multiple burial pits that contain older adult females. The burial that serves as the western edge of the square ground feature contains two relatively older females, Burials 95 and 96, who are both

oriented to the north. The other pit, which forms the southern edge of the Central Square cluster, contains one older adult female, Burial 123, and two children, Burials 124 and 124a. Assuming from the demographic data that the Southwest cluster is a kin group, these adult females in the foundation pits may be matriarchs, similar to the foundation Burial 117 in the Southeast cluster. Also like Burial 117, the children's remains included with Burial 123 may be her biological children. The southernmost burial is also a multiple burial pit that contains the remains of an older adult male, an older adult female, and one child, which could be the collective remains of a nuclear family within the kin group represented by the Southwestern cluster.

There is little variability among determinable body positions within this group. Ten of the 16 individuals were interred in a flexed position, and two children were buried in urns. This lack of variation could indicate that those in the Southwestern cluster generally held a similar social status. Burial 95, one of the two in the large pit on the western side of the Central Square cluster, was interred in a flexed position, but on her back. This positioning was seen with all flexed individuals in the Northern cluster and a portion of the flexed individuals in the Southeastern cluster. This differential treatment may be indicative of a distinguished social status relative to other members of the Southwestern group, as the remaining flexed individuals were interred on their sides. The two urn burials, 97 and 98, were located to the north and northwest of the pit containing Burials 95 and 96. As they are not included in the pit, they may not be biologically related to either 95 or 96. The urn interments are in single pits, but seem to be spatially associated with the larger foundation burial pit (Figure 5.8). Each of the urn burials is in line with the cranium of one of the interments in the foundation pit. These urn burials may then be interpreted as part of a ritual burial act related to the interments of 95 and 96, rather than as separate child burials.

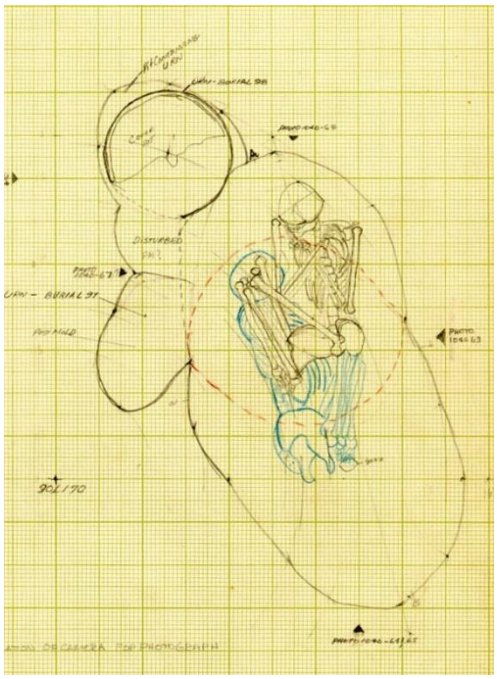

Figure 5.8. Field drawing of Burials 95-98 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

The presence of organic burial coverings was detected in the three burial pits in the Southwest cluster. Although the organic material had long since decayed, the excavators' notes record the presence of distinctive soil staining. In no other area in the cemetery was such staining noted. One other aspect of grave inclusions that distinguishes the Southwestern cluster is the association of some burials with large rocks. It does not appear that the rocks were modified in any way, but their deliberate placement within the interments, generally near the head, is indicative of their role in the burial ritual (Figure 5.9). In no other area within the Structure 7 cemetery are large rocks associated with burials. It appears that, like the Southeastern cluster, the Southwestern cluster is kin-based due to the presence of individuals of all ages and both sex categories. The Southwestern group also seems to have held matriarchs in high esteem, as the two foundation pits for the cluster include older adult females. The consistent treatment in regard to burial positioning among the members of the group is likely a sign of similar social positions

between individuals, although some members of the group were distinguished from the others, including one individual who was interred on her back. Others were distinguished through associations with burial coverings and rocks.

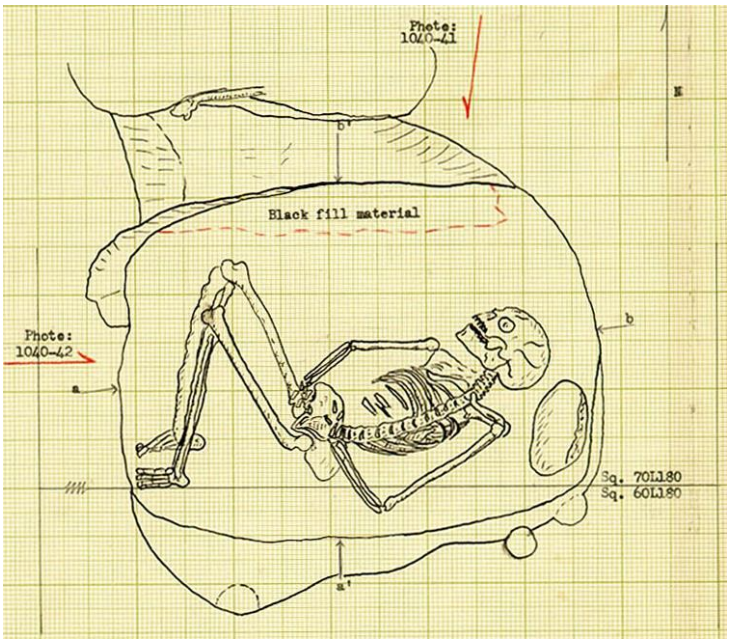

Figure 5.9. Field drawing showing rock placement in Southwestern cluster (drawn by Helmuth Naumer, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

Structure 7 and the Town Creek Community

The primary purpose of this analysis was accomplished in the identification of smaller social groups that were included within the Structure 7 cemetery. While the cemetery was chosen for this research for its large dataset, the meaning behind the population became more apparent through the analysis and interpretation of the five clusters that compose the cemetery (Figure 5.10). Previous analyses of Town Creek's mortuary record likened the Structure 7

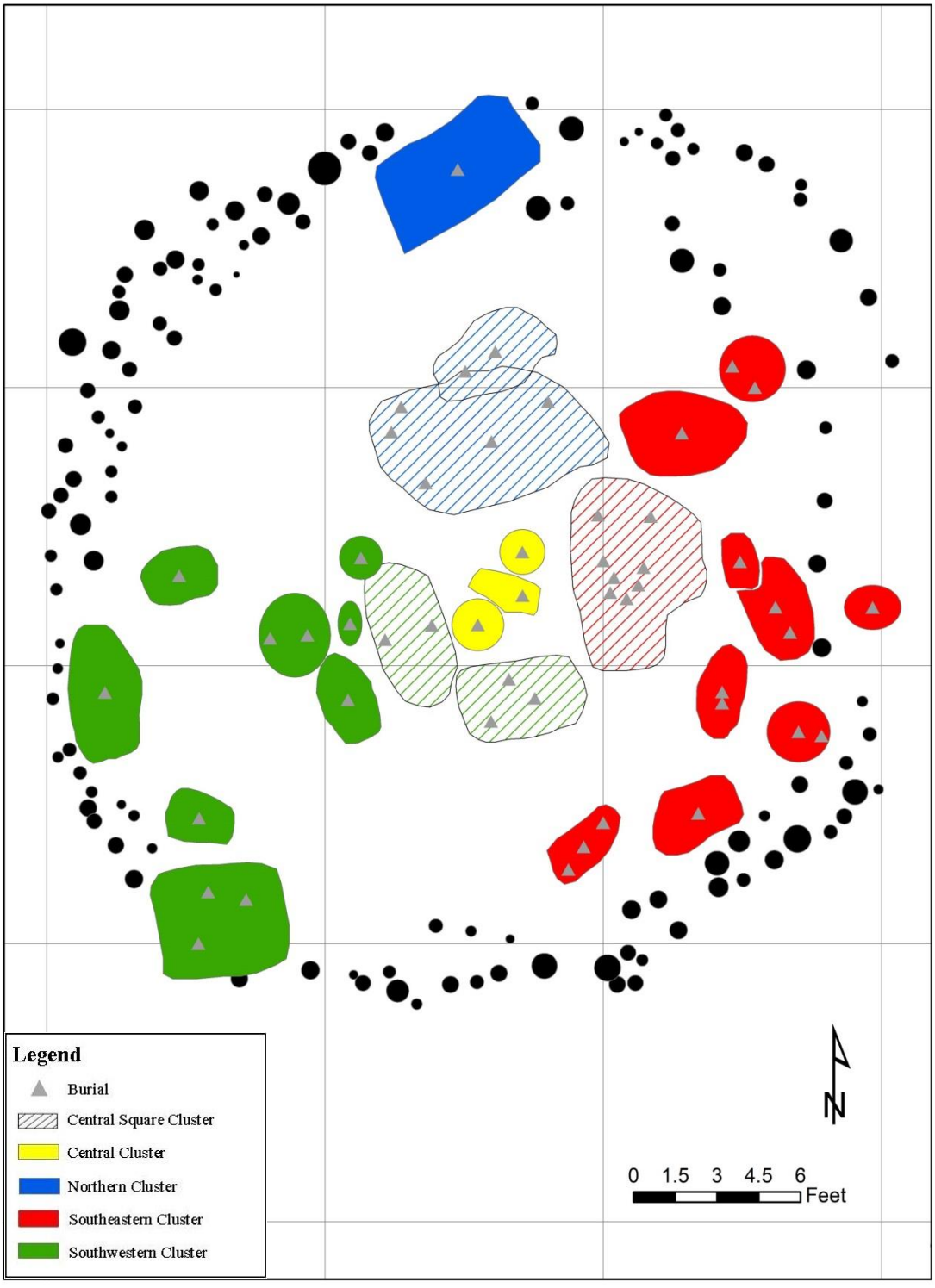

Figure 5.10. Individual clusters within the Structure 7 cemetery.

cemetery to others at the site. Other enclosed circular structures, such as Structure 1, were considered to be especially viable analogs (Boudreaux 2005:305-307, 2007:79-80, 2010:221-222). In analyzing the Structure 7 cemetery, I found that the population within the cemetery was divided into five distinct groups. In comparing these groups to the other cemeteries at Town Creek, it can be seen that the larger clusters in Structure 7, the Southeastern and Southwestern clusters, contain more burials than most of the other cemeteries at the site in their entirety. The second-largest cemetery at Town Creek, Structure 1 with 30 burials, is similar to Structure 7's Southeastern cluster in size. Also, distinctive attributes such as urn and extended burials are found in an especially high concentration within the Structure 7 cemetery. Three of the 12 total extended burials, and seven of the 15 total urn burials are included in Structure 7. As social and political leadership roles were probably more limited in the community, the majority of the burial clusters at the site are kin-based (Boudreaux 2005:317; 2013:6). The kin group or groups that used the Structure 7 cemetery likely were the longest lasting in the community or may have been the largest in the community (Boudreaux 2013:11-12). The smaller kin-based clusters elsewhere on the site may have contained fewer burials because they were used for a shorter period of time or by smaller groups.

The higher number of burials, which probably reflects time depth, is not the only attribute that distinguishes groups within the Structure 7 cemetery from the others throughout the site. The presence of four separate, smaller social groups in the Structure 7 cemetery shows the complexity of the larger social group it represents. Through their interment in Structure 7, the Southeastern and Southwestern groups are associated with the political group represented by the Northern cluster in the same cemetery. As mentioned earlier, there was likely limited access to political power, so the relation to leadership in Structure 7 is socially significant for all in

interred there. Further, the occurrence of urn burials is higher in the Structure 7 cemetery than in any of the other burial clusters at Town Creek. In fact, the entire burial component at Town Creek includes 15 urn burials, and seven of them are found in the Structure 7 cemetery.

According to ethnohistoric accounts, Native American groups were organized into matrilineal clans that were comprised of multiple lineages. These groups were known to have maintained separate households, often burying their dead beneath the floors of domestic structures (Hudson 1976:213-218; Knight 1990:6, 2010:358-360; Wilson 2008:13). The burial activity observed within Structure 7 resembles this behavior, and is thus likely a structure – turned cemetery – that was maintained by members of the same clan. The Southeastern and Southwestern clusters may represent different lineages that belonged to the same clan group. The clans that composed communities were ranked (Knight 1990:10), and the clan that is represented by the cemetery at Structure 7 appears to have been one of especially high rank that may have provided political leadership for all of Town Creek. The males of seemingly significant social status within the Northern cluster may represent such leaders, or they may have been representatives of the clan within the larger village government. Whatever their individual roles in Town Creek's society, those buried in the Structure 7 cemetery are likely part of one group that maintained an exclusive, bounded cemetery area for multiple generations. Returning to the theories of Binford, Saxe, and Goldstein (Binford 1971:6; Brown 1995:13-15; Goldstein 1980; Saxe 1970:119), it is likely that the clan associated with Structure 7 was legitimizing their rights to resources or privileges in the community. As this group appears to have held a particularly elevated social position relative to the other clans at Town Creek, the maintenance of the Structure 7 cemetery may have functioned to sustain their position within the social organization of the community.

Much can be inferred about the community as a whole through analysis of the multigenerational kin groups in Structure 7 studied here. Figure 5.11 summarizes the age, sex, and grave good data as they pertain to each group within the cemetery. From this depiction of the data, it can be seen that the inclusion of grave goods cross-cuts age and sex categories and varies only among the identified clusters, but there is some clustering in grave goods associations at certain age ranges. Figure 5.12 shows the same information in regard to burial positioning. As adult males, adult females, and children show similar burial treatment in regard to grave goods and body positioning attributes throughout the site, it can be inferred that Town Creek incorporated both ascriptive and achieved status structures in its social organization (see Goldstein 1981:63; Marcoux 2010:160; Wilson et al. 2010:77-83).

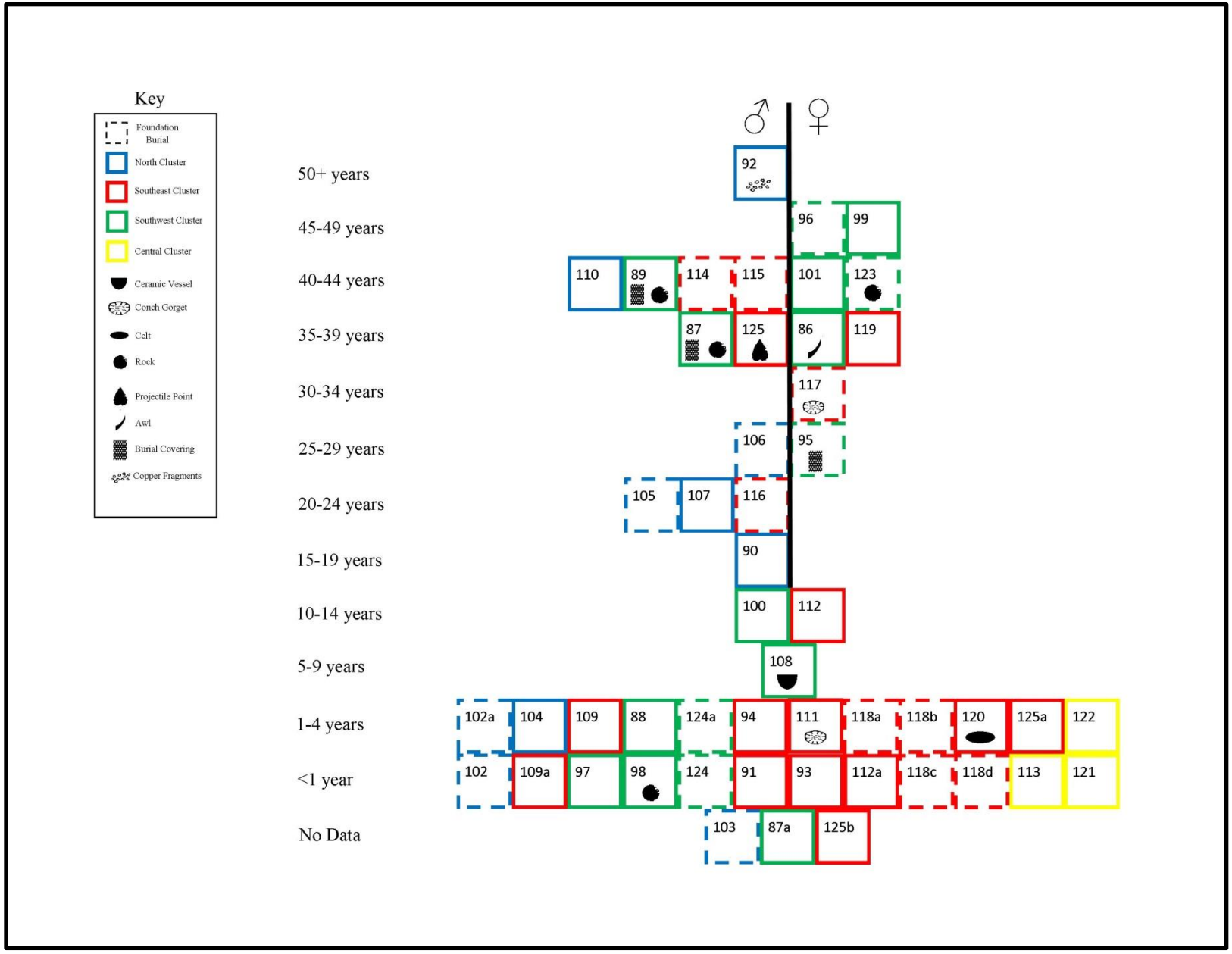

Figure 5.11. Sherratt diagram summarizing demographic and grave good attributes of Structure 7 cemetery burials.

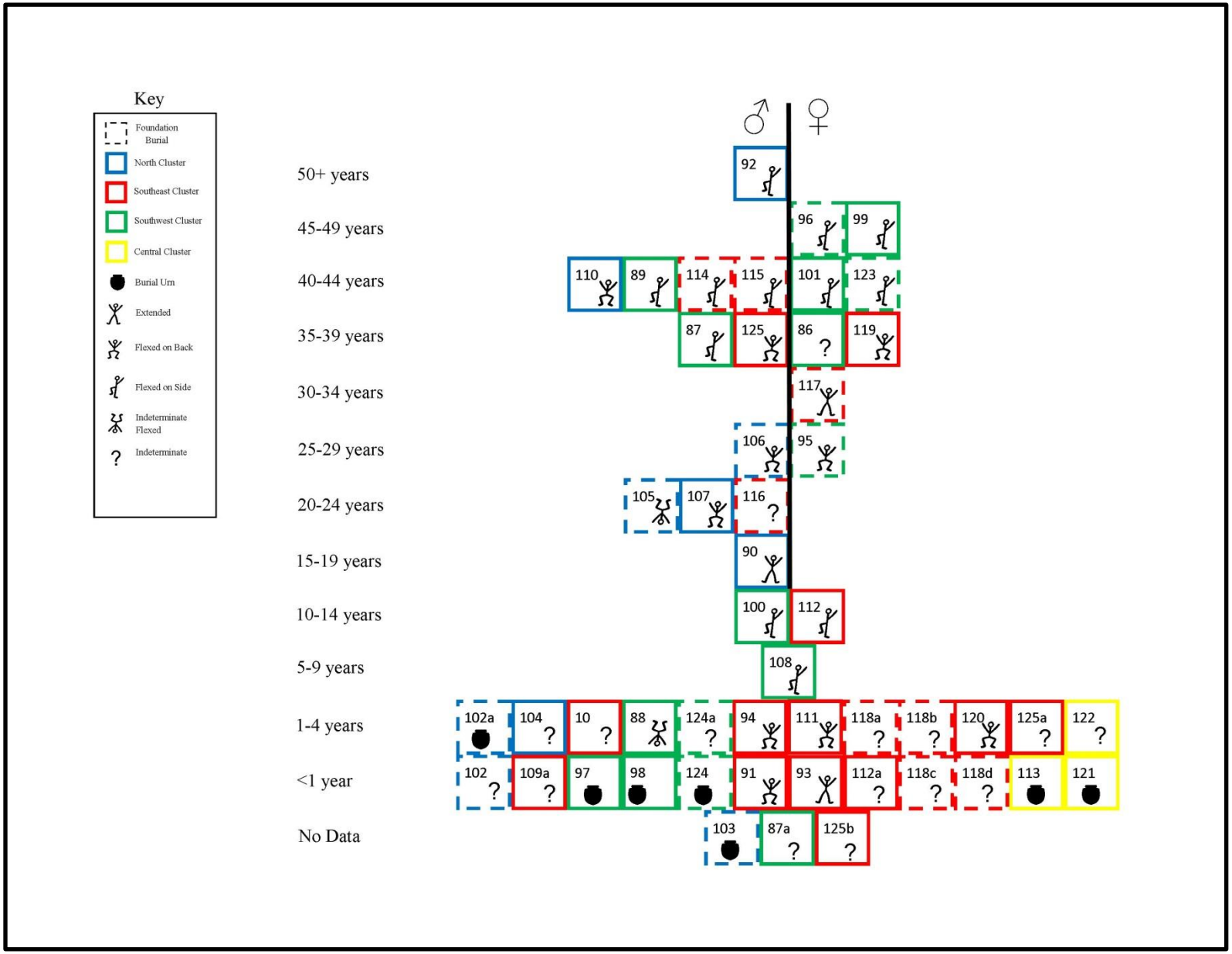

Figure 5.12. Sherratt diagram summarizing demographic and body positioning attributes of Structure 7 cemetery burials.

Summary

This chapter has introduced, described, and interpreted the five clusters defined in my analysis of the Structure 7 cemetery at Town Creek. The cemetery was found to consist of a central ritual cluster, a politically-based cluster, and two kin-based lineages. In comparing my findings to other cemeteries at the site, the Structure 7 cemetery appears to have been maintained by a clan of an especially distinguished social status. In future research, the burial attributes found to be significant in defining separate social groups in Structure 7 may help to identify clusters within other cemeteries at Town Creek and in mortuary contexts throughout the region. The next chapter will summarize my analysis and identify opportunities for future research.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The archaeology of Mississippian societies has been a consistent interest and pursuit for researchers in the southeastern United States for over a century (Hally and Mainfort 2004:273-274). These prehistoric groups left behind fascinating and compelling evidence of social organization including the construction of earthen mounds, deliberately arranged communities and structures, and especially bounded and discrete cemetery areas (Blitz 2010:7; King 2001:10; Lewis et al. 1998). The Town Creek site in North Carolina is a Mississippian site that features all three of these characteristics (Boudreaux 2005:12), but this thesis has concentrated on one of the several separate mortuary contexts at the site, the cemetery within Structure 7.

Although the Town Creek site began as a village, the construction of its earthen mound is consistent with a social restructuring that eventually lead to the site's transition to a necropolis. Several domestic structures from early in the town's history (A.D. 1150-1250) were transformed into discrete, bounded cemeteries sometime between A.D. 1250 and 1350 (Boudreaux 2010:201-230). One such example of this behavior is found at Structure 7, the cemetery with the largest burial population at Town Creek. Structure 7 was chosen for this analysis because it is the largest fully excavated cemetery at the site, and recent research into the site's history and development has yielded a detailed dataset of burial information. Although the dissertations of Driscoll (2001) and Boudreaux (2005) both present broad interpretations of the mortuary component at Town Creek, my analysis concentrates on one cemetery at the site in an attempt to interpret internal social dynamics through the identification of discrete groups within one of Town Creek's many burial areas.

Research trends in Mississippian archaeology have combined spatial analysis with ethnohistoric analogy to interpret mortuary contexts, especially regarding the identification of

separate social groups (Blitz 2010:9-10; Livingood 2008:3-4; Knight 1990:9-17; Wilson 2008:11-13, 2010:8-9). According to the ethnographic and ethnohistoric accounts of historic Southeastern native groups such as the Cherokee, Creek, and Natchez, communities consisted of multiple ranked clans. These clans were made up of multiple lineages, or household groups (Hudson 1976:213-218; Knight 1990:6, 2010:358-360). Theories developed by Binford (1971), Saxe (1979), and Goldstein (1980), state that these groups maintained formalized areas for their burial practices in order to legitimize their rights to limited resources or privileges within the community. Further, the nature of these groups, and the individuals that constituted them, may be inferred through the analysis of the social dimensions represented in the burial context. My analysis identified separate social groups through visual spatial analysis as well as through the distribution of several burial attributes that include burial depth, age, sex, grave goods, body positioning, and body orientation. These specific attributes were chosen for this analysis because of their utility in similar analyses of comparable sites in the region (Goldstein 1981; Hally 2008; King 2010; Marcoux 2010; Wilson et al. 2010). Most of the data used in my research were compiled from the RLA's NAGPRA inventory (Davis et al. 1998). Other information was derived from the dissertations of Driscoll (2001), Boudreaux (2005), and the original site forms.

My preliminary visual analysis of the Structure 7 cemetery identified a significant central area in which four, large, multiple-burial pits formed a square that surrounded three smaller burials. The square formation is likely representative of the initial burial activity within the cemetery, as these burials occupy a large central area and they are arranged in a deliberate manner. The majority of the burials seemed to radiate outward from these two central burial clusters. In a few instances around the cemetery's perimeter, burial pits superimposed the domestic structure's postholes, which indicates that their interment post-dated the time when a

domestic structure was present. This superposition occurred in three distinct areas around the cemetery to the north, southeast, and southwest. These three burials that were most distant from the center of the cemetery were thought to indicate the probable existence of at least three social groups. The spatial boundaries of these sub-groups within the cemetery became more defined through the analysis of the spatial distribution of burial attributes.

Although it did not prove particularly useful in this analysis, the depths of the burials pits were compared in an attempt to reconstruct a relative burial chronology for the cemetery based on stratigraphy. The rest of the burial attributes were analyzed as to their distribution in the cemetery via color-coded maps produced through GIS software. Demographic data, including age and sex, were especially indicative of the nature of the defined groups when combined with the other data. The presence of both males and females and all age groups indicates that the Southeastern and Southwestern groups represented kin groups, whereas the exclusive presence of adult males and children in the Northern group indicates the presence of a group based on something other than kinship, possibly political status or some other position. The nature of the group within the Central Square cluster was also interpreted in part by demographic data. The Central cluster did not include adults and showed no signs of personalization which indicated its ritual function for the groups utilizing the cemetery rather than as a cluster of personal interments. The Northern cluster was also differentiated from the Southeastern and Southwestern clusters by its lack of associated grave goods. The boundaries of the Southeastern and Southwestern clusters became more defined based on the distribution of artifact types. Burials in the Southeastern cluster were associated with copper fragments, one celt, and shell gorgets. These types of artifacts were not found in any other area in the cemetery. Burials in the Southwestern cluster were associated with large, deliberately placed rocks and organic burial

coverings, artifact types that were present only in the Southwestern cluster. Mortuary behavior in regard to burial positioning also facilitated the definition of group boundaries within the cemetery. Urn burials were found in the Central, Northern, and Southwestern clusters, but they were absent from the Southeastern cluster. A few extended burials were also present in the cemetery, but only in the Northern and Southeastern clusters. Flexed burials, which accounted for the majority of interments in the Structure 7 cemetery, showed some variation in regard to the deliberate positioning of the individual's back. Side interments, which were the most common, require less effort in positioning than back interments (Moore 1915:182-183). Of the flexed individuals in the Northern cluster, all were found deliberately positioned on their backs. Several other back interments were found throughout the Southeastern cluster, while there was only one instance of this treatment in the Southwestern cluster. The distribution of burials by body orientation was also analyzed, but this method yielded no obvious patterning.

Five discrete burial clusters were identified within the Structure 7 cemetery by comparing maps based on the distribution of the burial attributes discussed above. The Central Square cluster consists of the four large multiple burials pits in the center of the cemetery, and it was identified in the visual analysis. Its layout spatially replicates the arrangement of social organization in multiple ethnographic examples. In many native groups, each side of the square represented a cardinal direction that was assigned to a specific social status (Hally 2008:148; Hudson 1976:220; King 2010:61; Knight 1998:58). It is interpreted here as the ritualized foundation of the cemetery, and each of the four large interments establish the burial activity of the social groups identified, as they expand outward from the center toward the edges of Structure 7. The Central cluster is located within the Central Square cluster and consists of three individuals, all of whom are children. They are not associated with any grave goods, although

two were interred in urns. As it is surrounded by the four large multiple burial pits, the Central cluster is spatially bounded. This grouping was interpreted as the remains of a ritualized interment event or events significant for all groups interred in the cemetery, as it was centrally located within the Central Square cluster, a ritualized representation of native social organization (King 2010:62). Further, none of these burials was personalized or showed signs of personal attachment, as no grave goods were present. The Northern cluster was especially distinctive because it included only adult males and children, a pattern that led to its interpretation as a group of social or political leaders as men generally occupied community leadership positions in native Southeastern clusters (Hudson 1976:223-226; Swanton 1931:96-99; 1970:374-375; 2006:41-44). The Southeastern and Southwestern groups were both identified as kin groups based on their demographic patterning wherein both sexes and a range of age groups were present (Wilson et al. 2010:83). They were differentiated from each other by the presence of specific artifact types that were unique to each group, as well as differences in burial positioning data in regard to urn burials. In examining the cultural attributes of the kin groups, it can be seen that the presence of associated artifacts and distinctive burial positioning are clustered in some areas, including in children's interments. This patterning shows that both ascriptive and achieved statuses may have existed within the Town Creek community (Hally 2008:497-519; Marcoux 2010:160; Wilson et al. 2010:83-84).

Considering the distinct groups that were associated through their burial in the Structure 7 cemetery, it is reasonable to deduce that they were all part of a high-ranking clan whose members maintained a common area for burial in order to legitimize their claims to privilege and social standing. If each of the cemeteries at Town Creek represented a separate clan, the group represented by Structure 7 would be the largest or have the greatest time depth, as it is the largest

cemetery at the site. The cemetery is also significant in that almost half of the urn burials from the entire site are found within Structure 7. The representation of social or political leadership in the Northern cluster may also indicate the social prominence of the clan.

Whatever the social position of those interred in the cemetery, Structure 7 is a distinct part of Town Creek's mortuary component. The frequent cultural activity at the structure, evidenced especially by its mortuary context, continues today. After its excavation, Structure 7 became the focus of an interpretive exhibit at the Town Creek Indian Mound historic site that has gone through several revisions since its construction. Today, the structure has been reconstructed over its original footprint and houses an interactive exhibit on native burial rituals (Carnes-McNaughton 2002:13-16).

Studies such as the one presented here are integral in understanding the social dynamics of past societies. The ethnohistoric record provides direction in interpreting variation among the burials, especially in the presence of multiple discrete cemeteries at one site. While broad approaches have been useful in obtaining burial data, they are not always reliable sources for cultural interpretation. Numerous multiple-lineage groups that make up one society leave behind evidence of their social organization that may go overlooked without first identifying smaller social components, as I have done with the Structure 7 cemetery. In referring to ethnographic analogy and analyzing the dataset from one cemetery, I have been able to construct an interpretation of the social organization represented by Structure 7. The patterns in particular attributes that I have identified in this thesis may be considered in future analyses of other cemetery areas at Town Creek such as at Structure 1, another large, enclosed cemetery. If similar patterns are present throughout the site, it may assist in identifying elements of mortuary

behavior that are unclear, such as the role of child burials in association with other sets of remains.

Although some aspects of Mississippian culture will inevitably elude accurate interpretation, it has been shown here that the consideration of the complex nature of these societies is a useful approach in reconstructing social systems. The Mississippian cultural group is made up of multiple regional variations, and each of these groups is further comprised of communities of smaller social groups. In acknowledging and investigating the specific patterns of smaller groups, such as I have done with the Structure 7 cemetery, interpretations can be compiled to reconstruct manifestations of larger social dynamics inter-communally and inter-regionally.

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Appendix

Drawings of the burial pits were included, in most cases, with the original site forms from the excavation of the Structure 7 cemetery. As these drawings were especially beneficial in my analysis of the burials, I have included them in this appendix to clarify my interpretations. All of the original site forms are curated at the RLA at UNC and are included here with their permission.

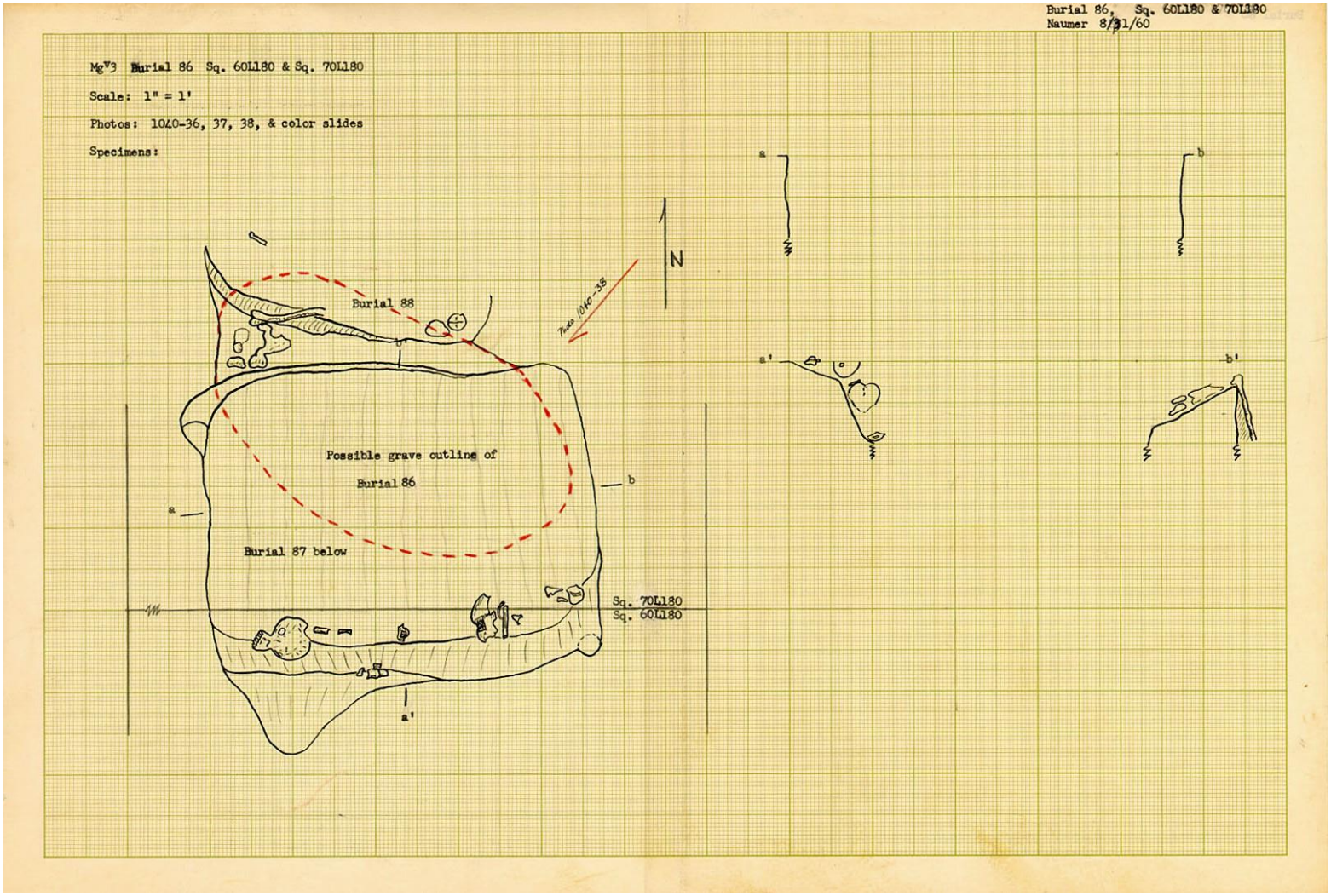

Figure A.1. Burial 86 (drawn by Helmuth Naumer, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

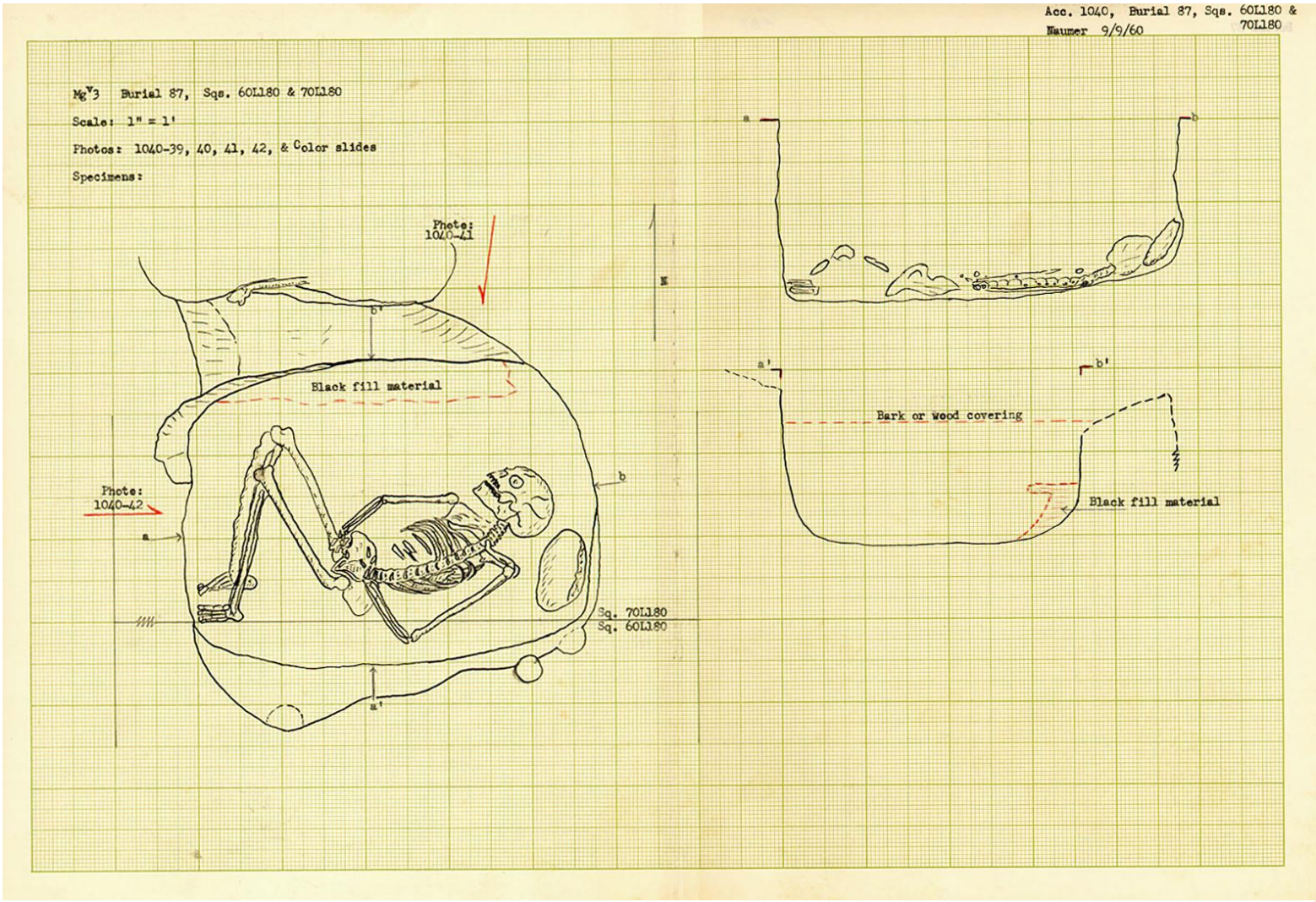

Figure A.2. Burial 87 (drawn by Helmuth Naumer, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

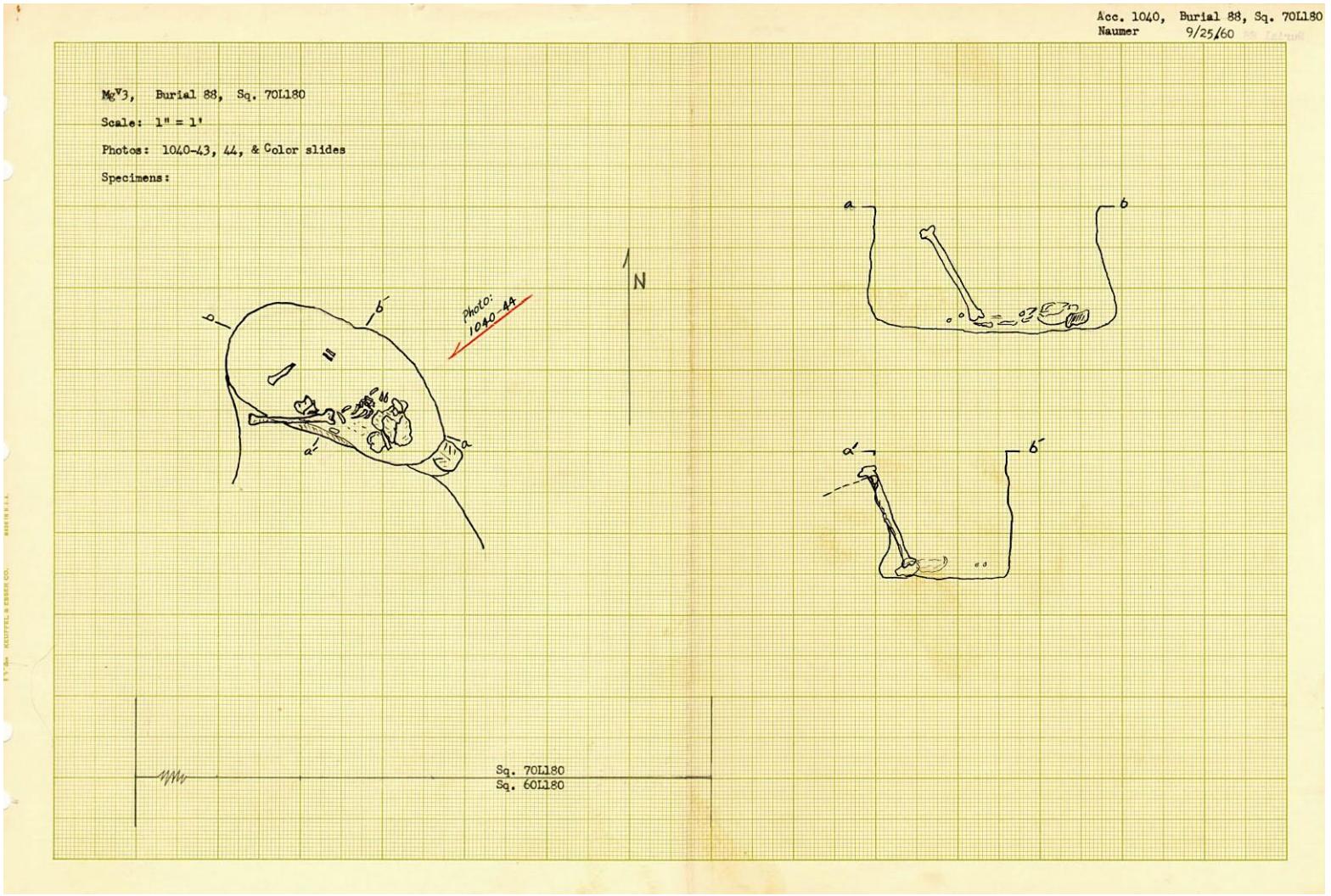

Figure A.3. Burial 88 (drawn by Helmuth Naumer, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

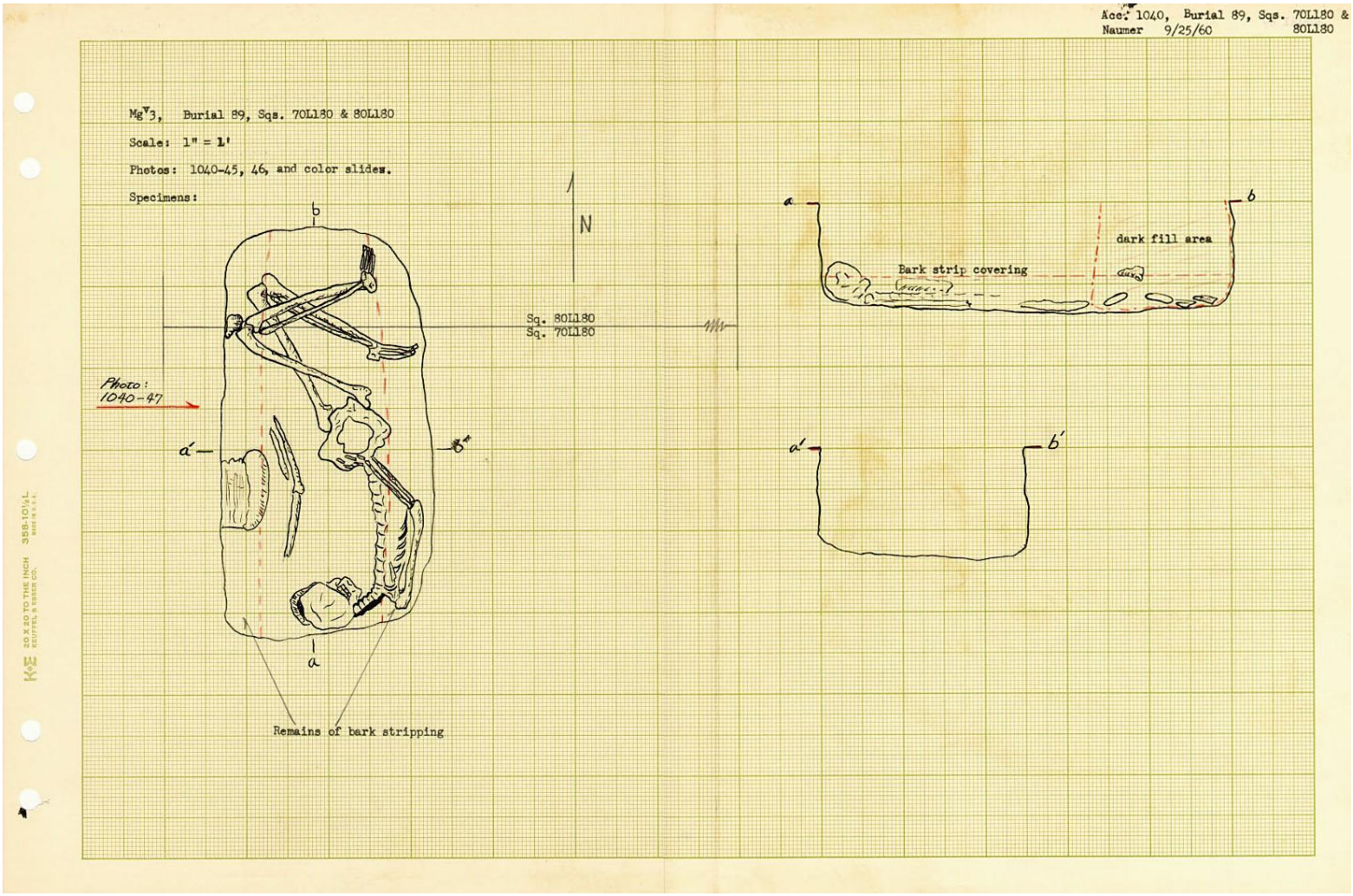

Figure A.4. Burial 89 (drawn by Helmuth Naumer, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

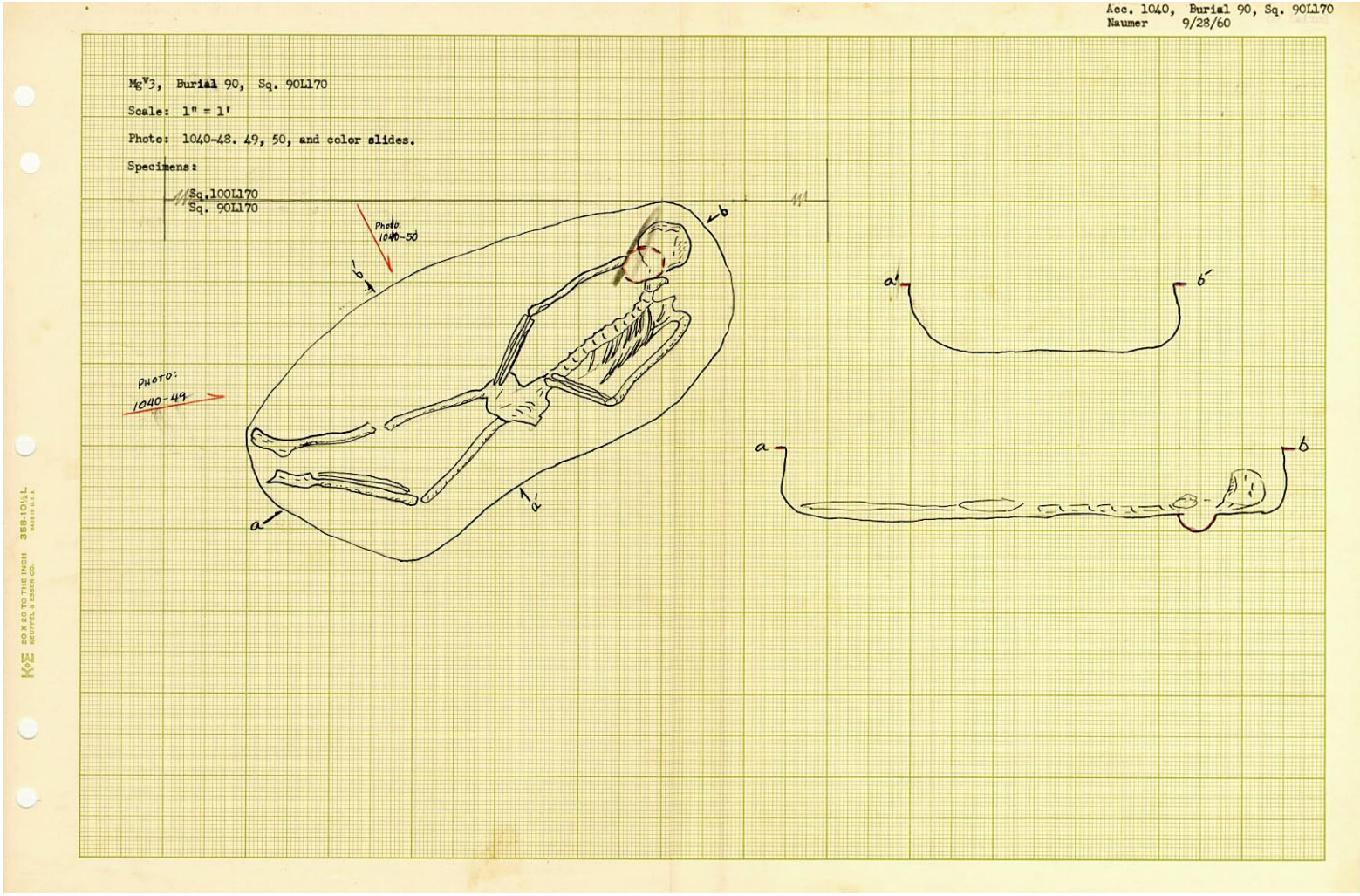

Figure A.5. Burial 90 (drawn by Helmuth Naumer Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

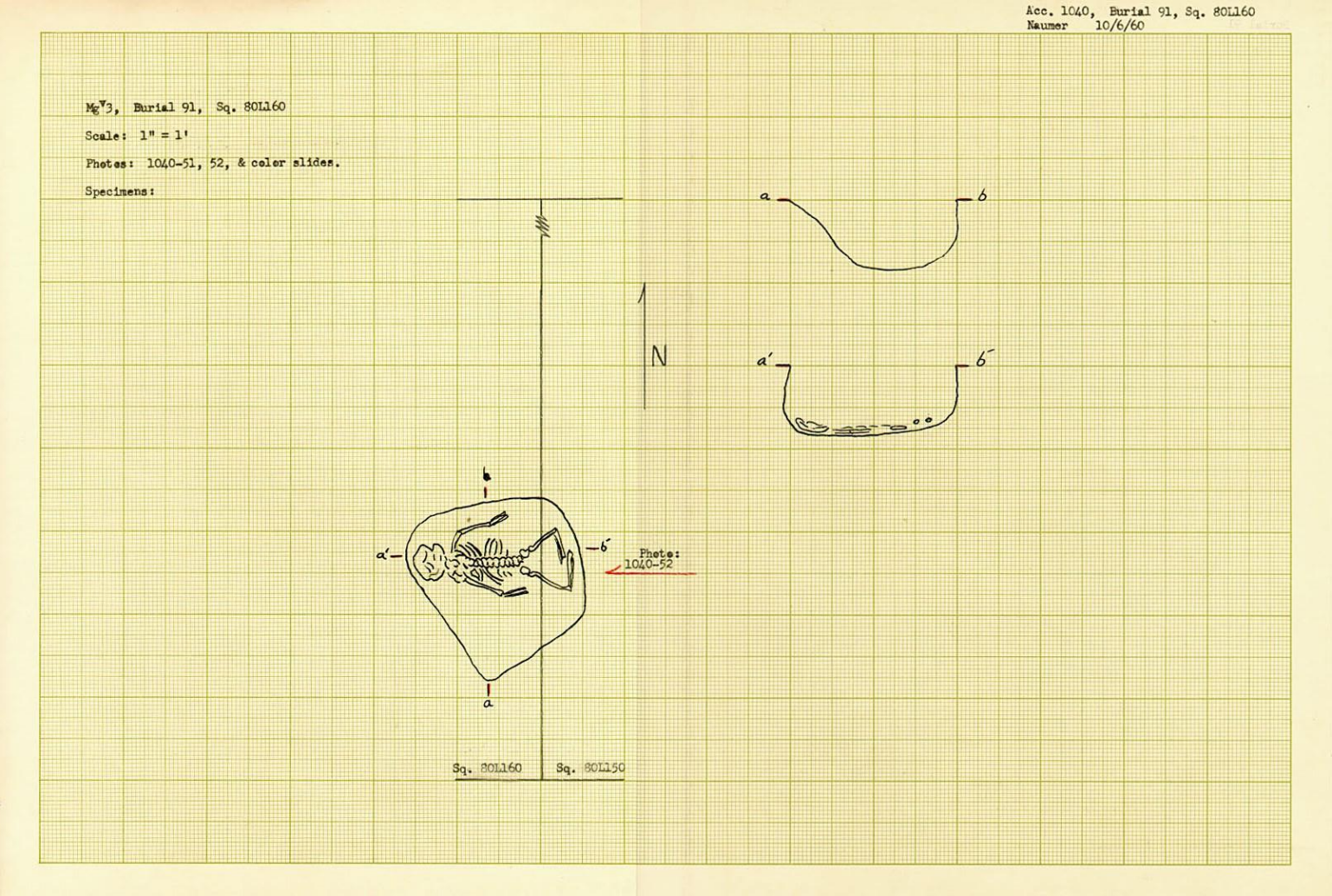

Figure A.6. Burial 91 (drawn by Helmuth Naumer, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

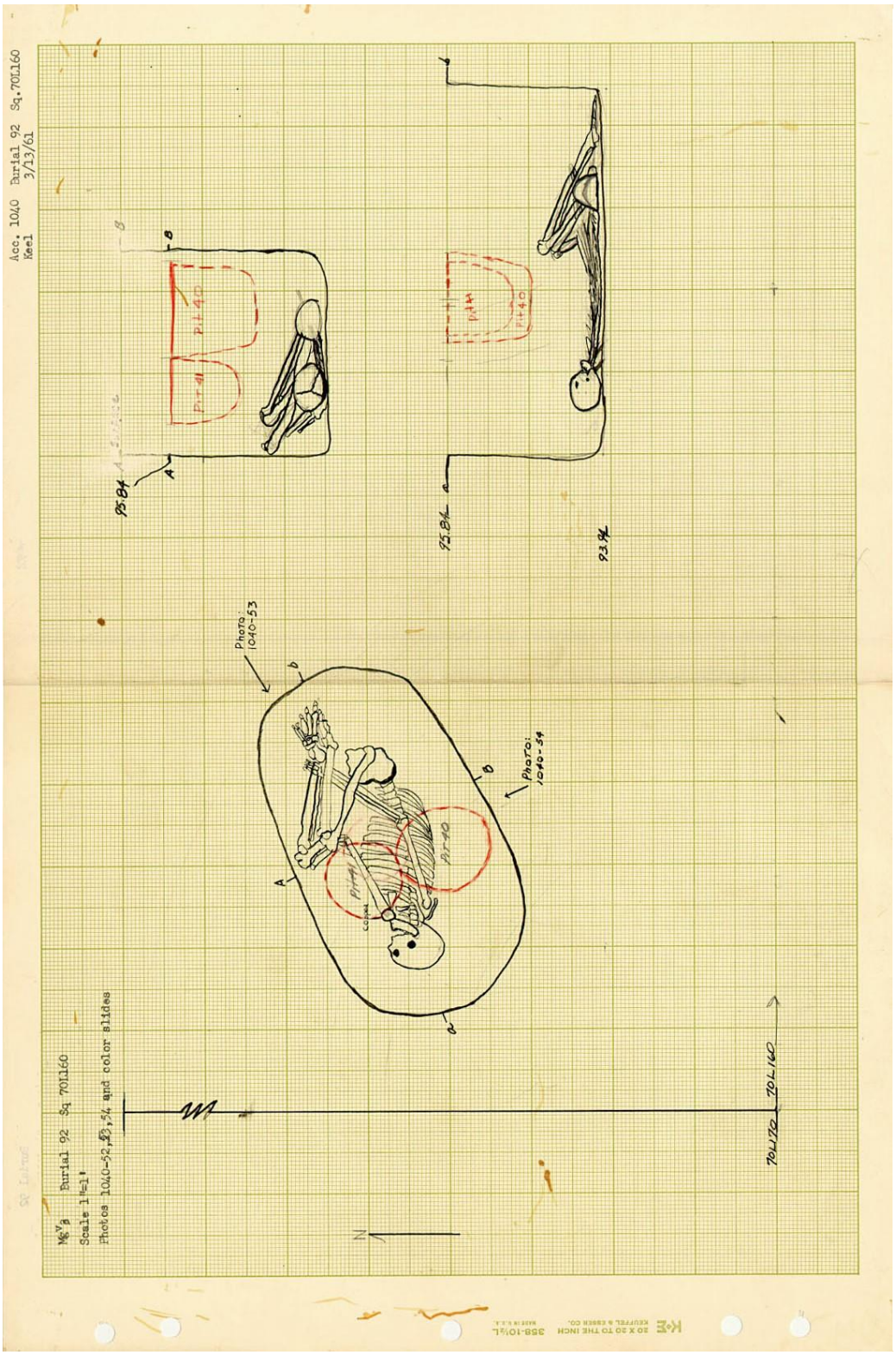

Figure A.7. Burial 92 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

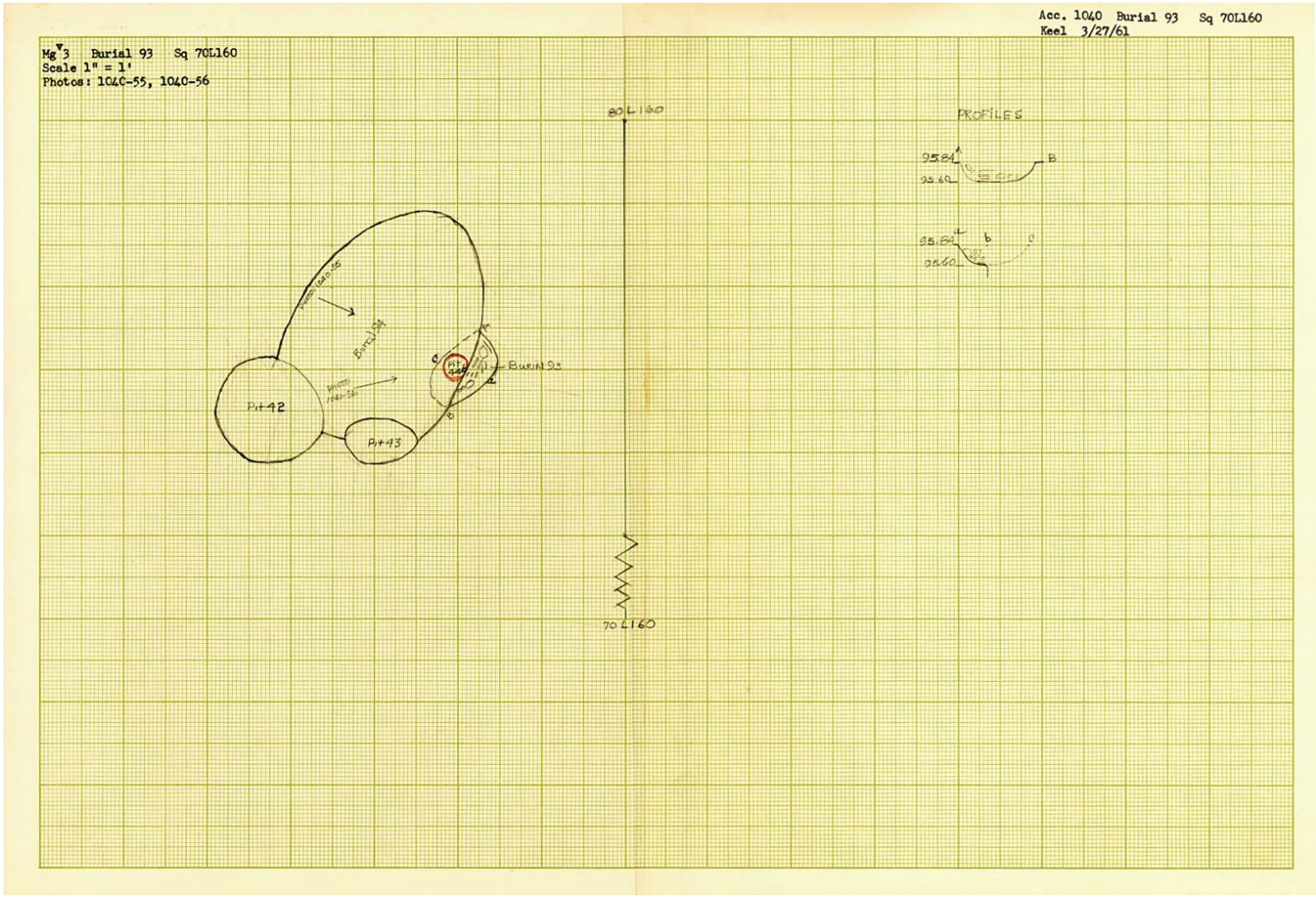

Figure A.8. Burial 93 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

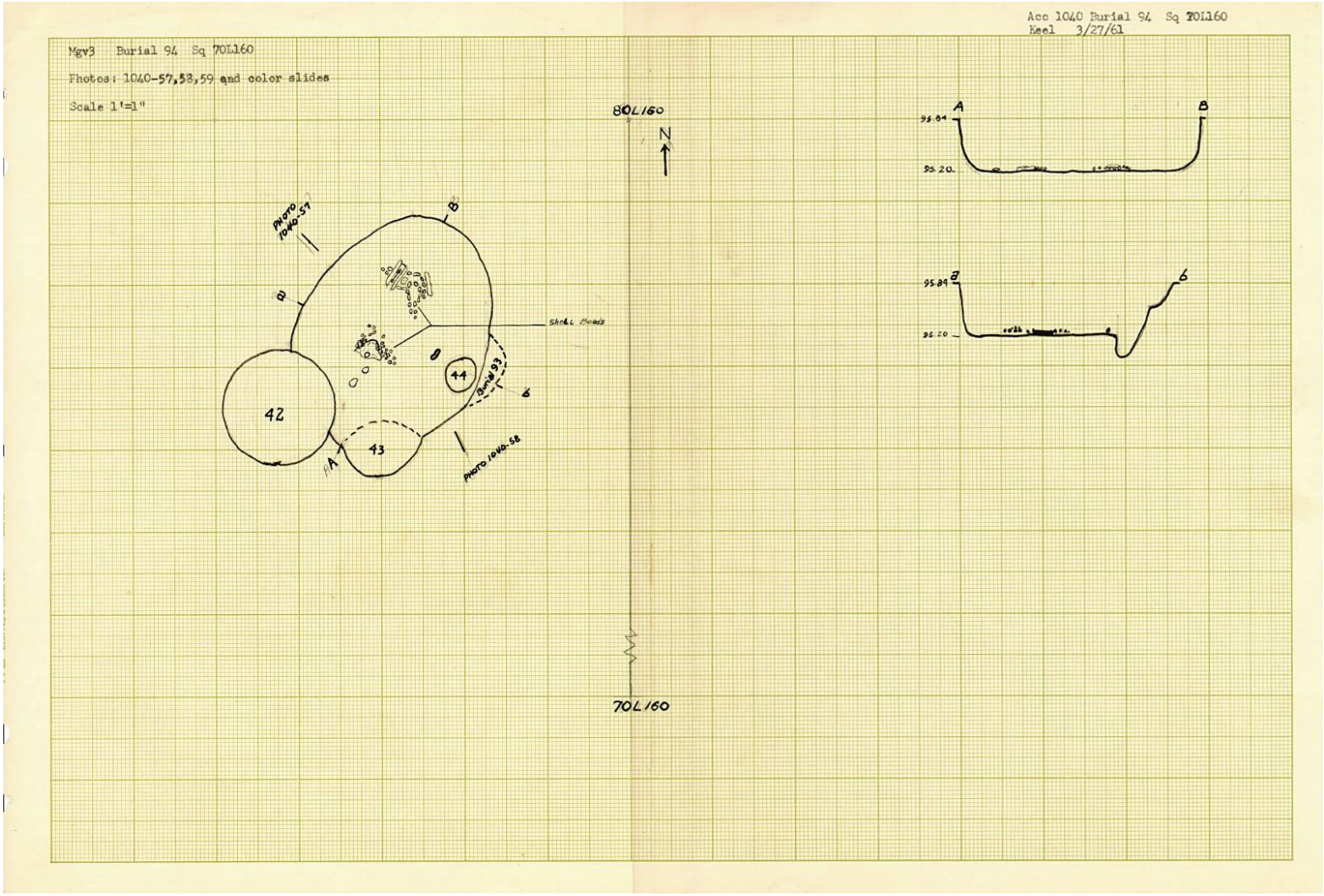

Figure A.9. Burial 94 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

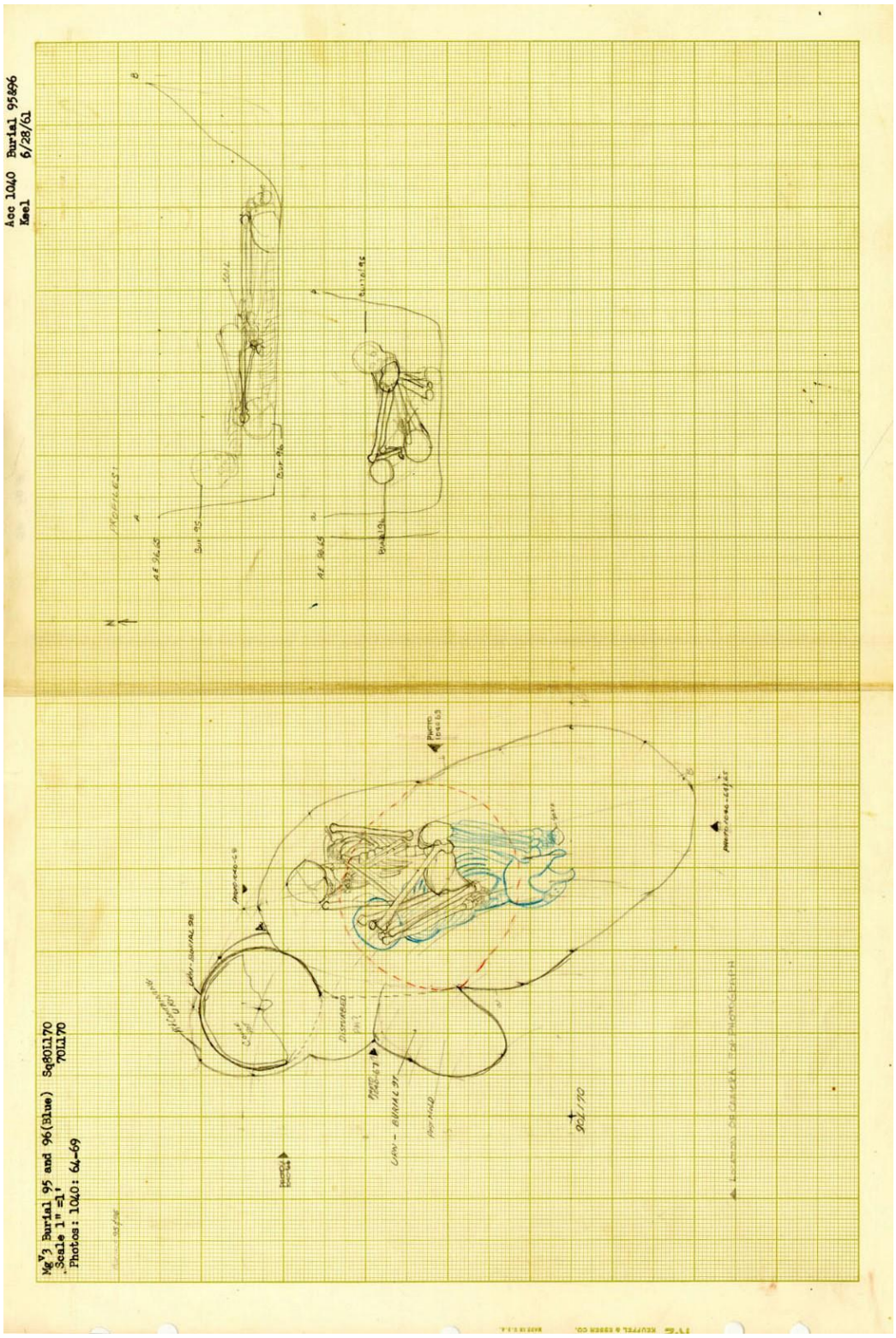

Figure A.10. Burials 95 and 96 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

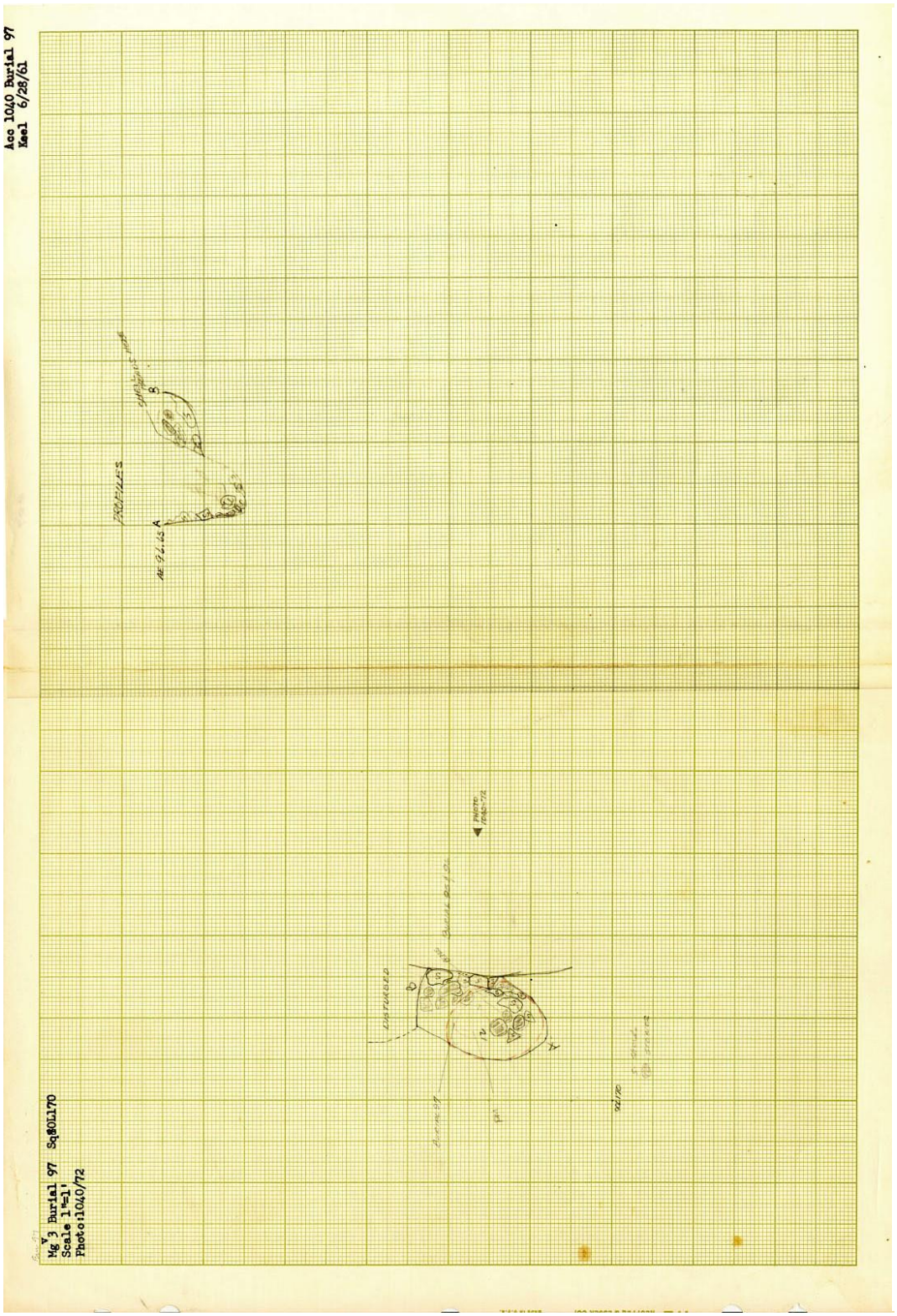

Figure A.11. Burial 97 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

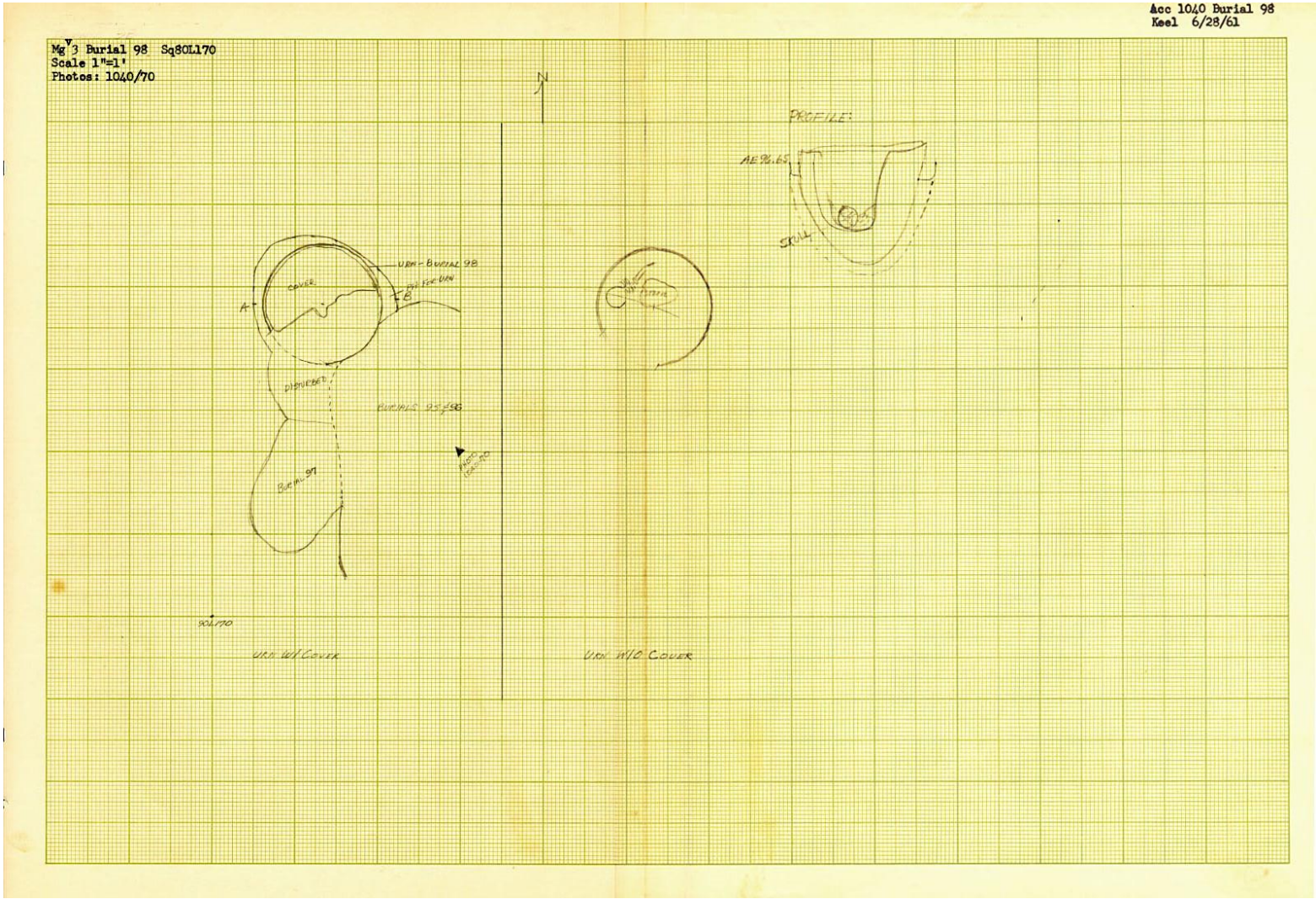

Figure A.12. Burial 98 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

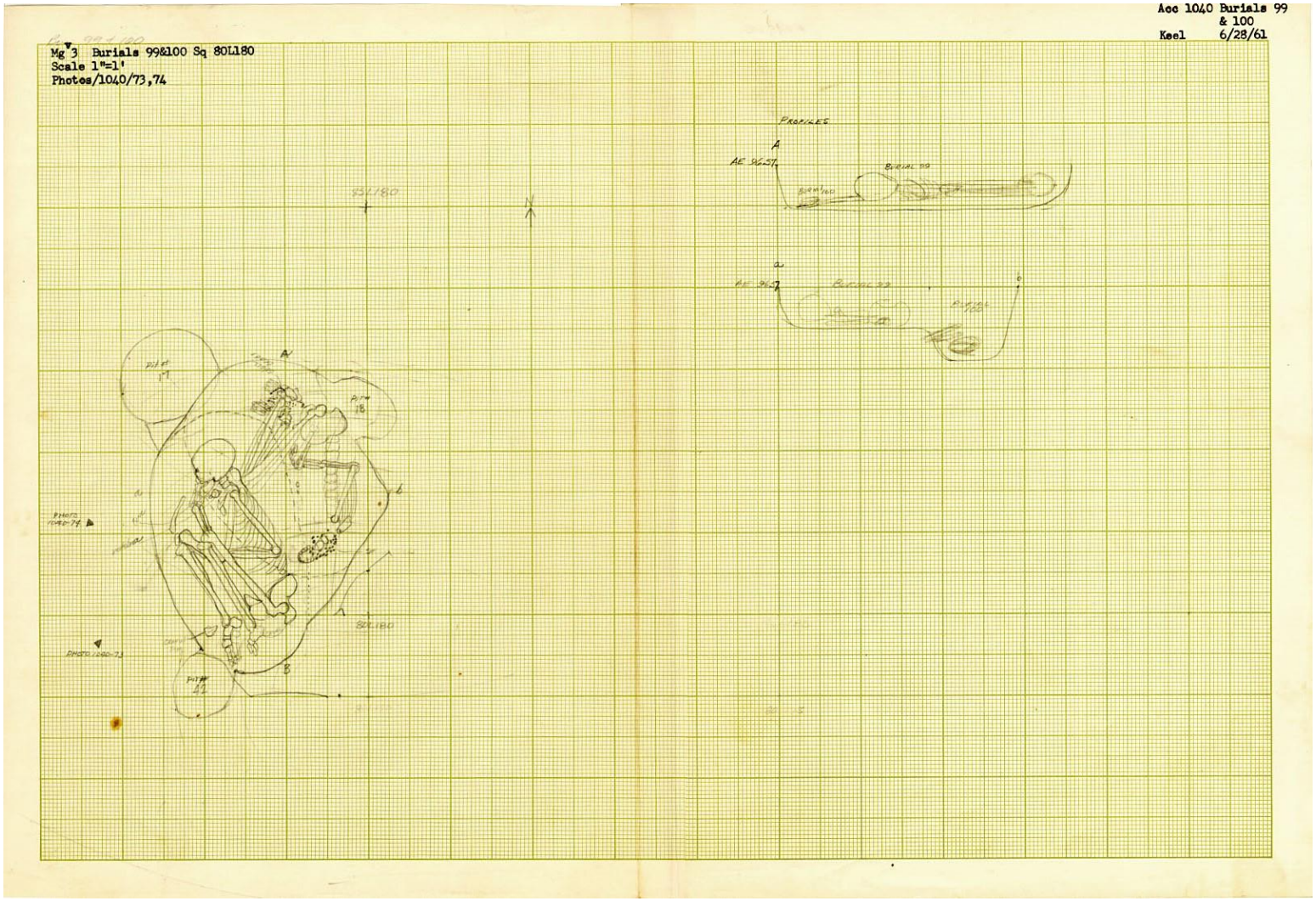

Figure A.13. Burials 99 and 100 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

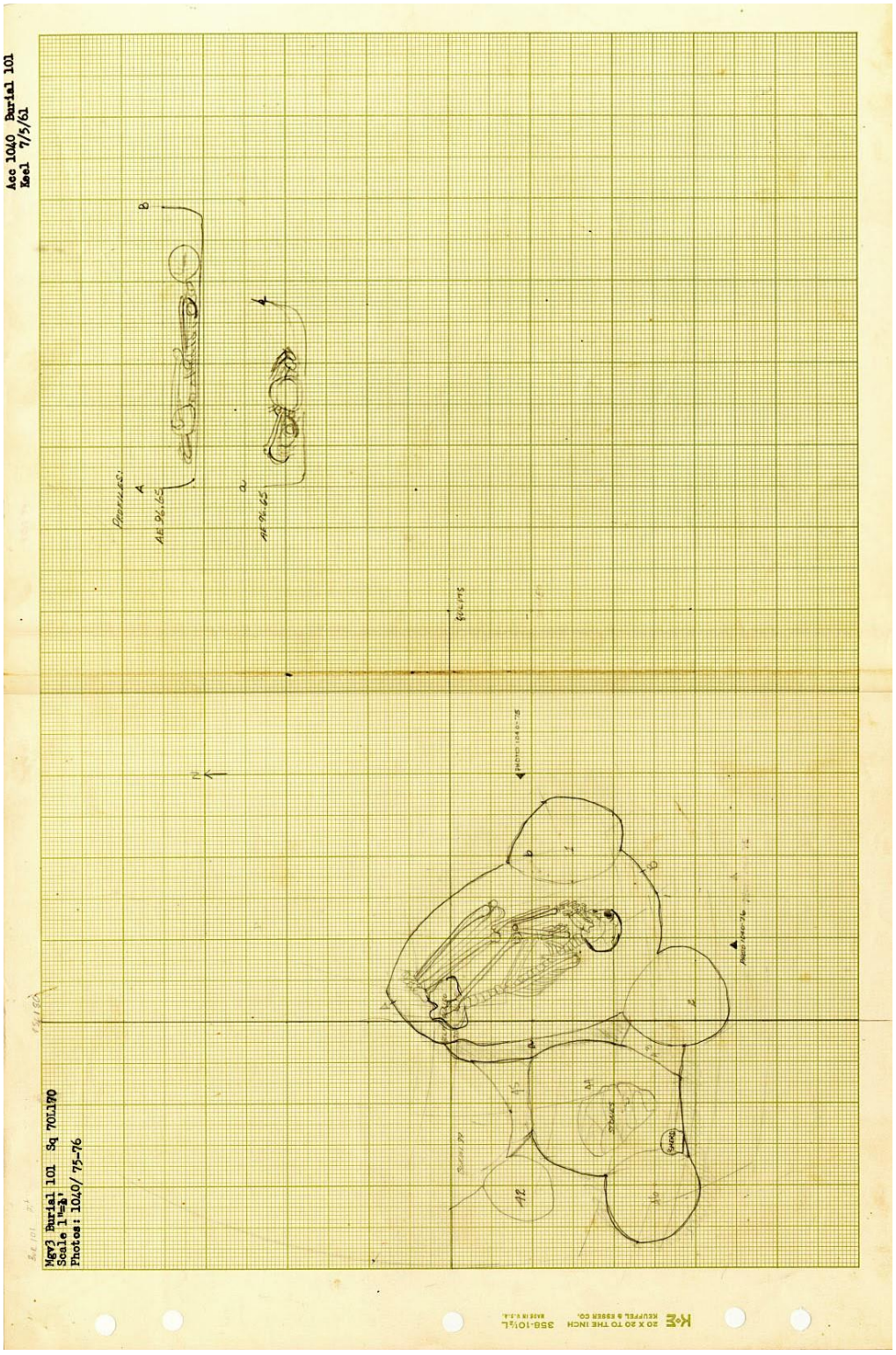

Figure A.14. Burial 101 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

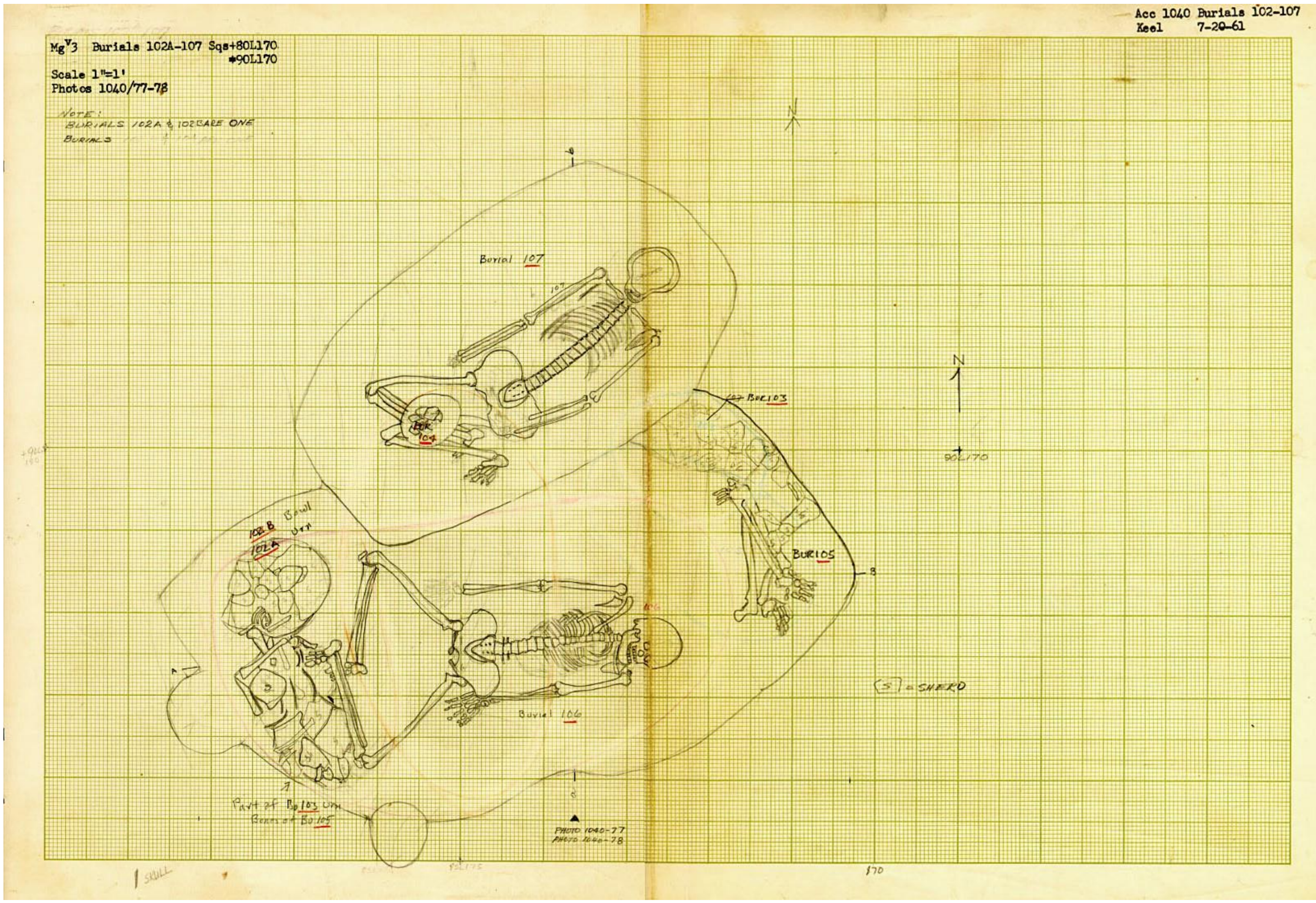

Figure A.15. Burials 102-107 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

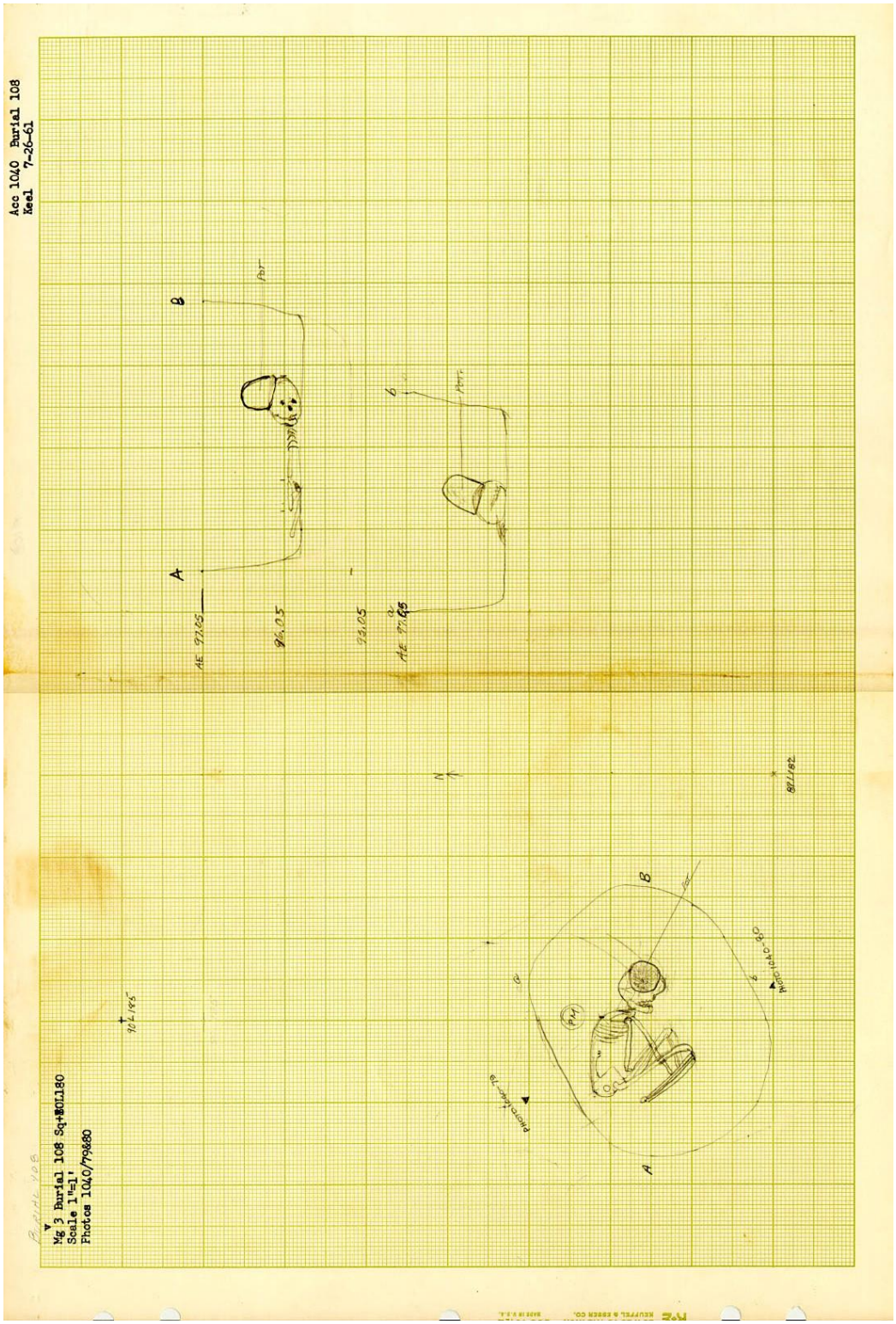

Figure A.16. Burial 108 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

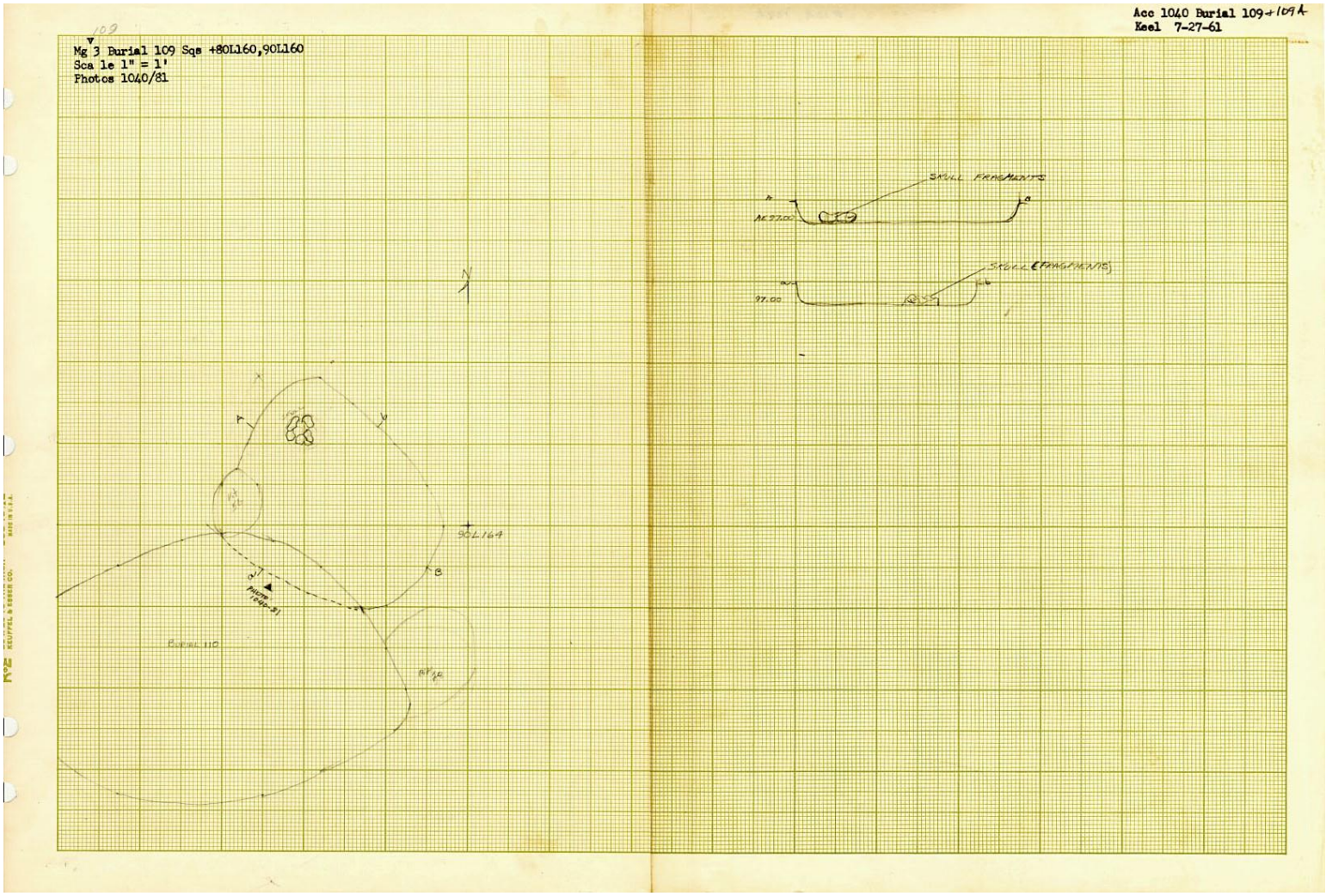

Figure A.17. Burial 109 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

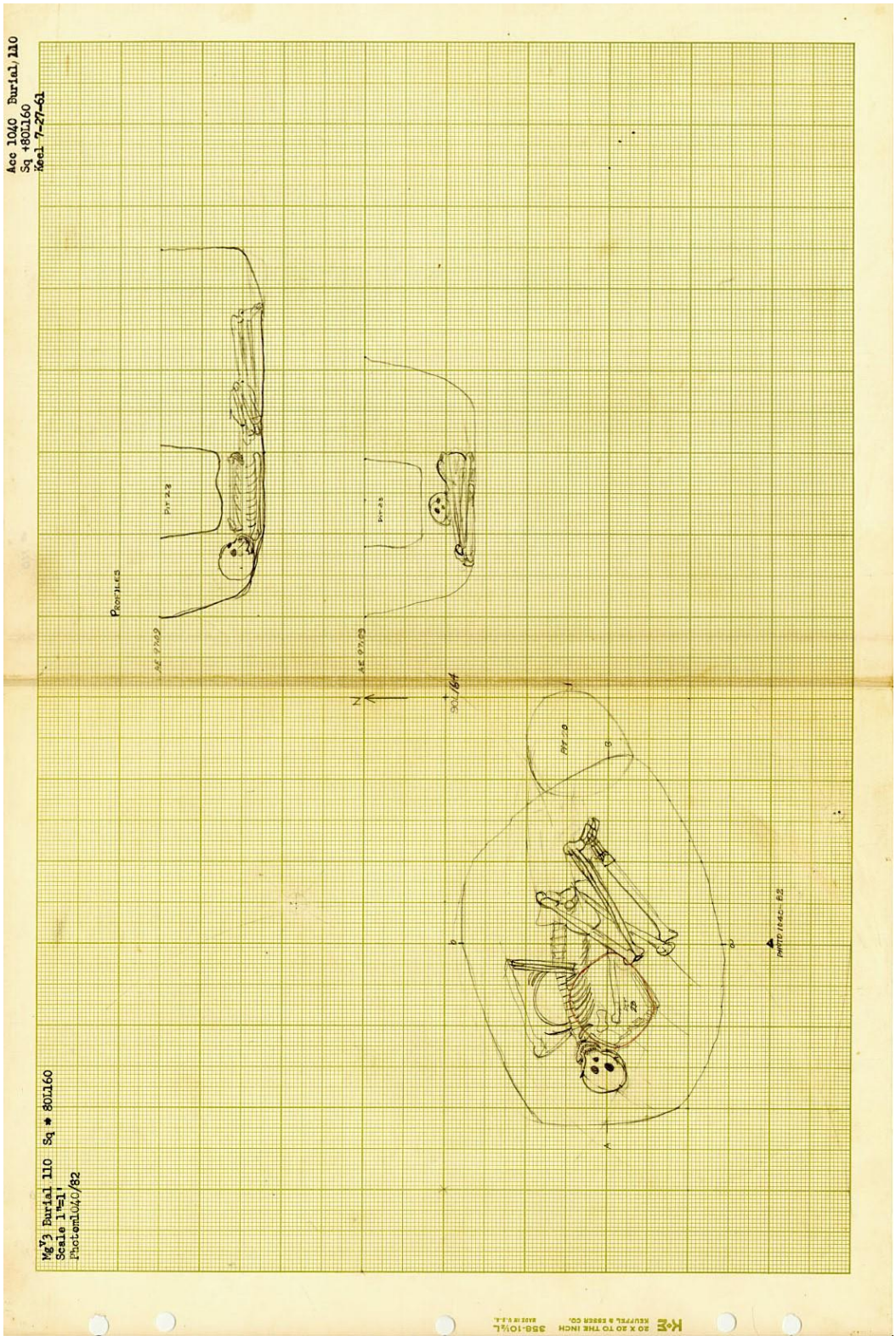

Figure A.18. Burial 110 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

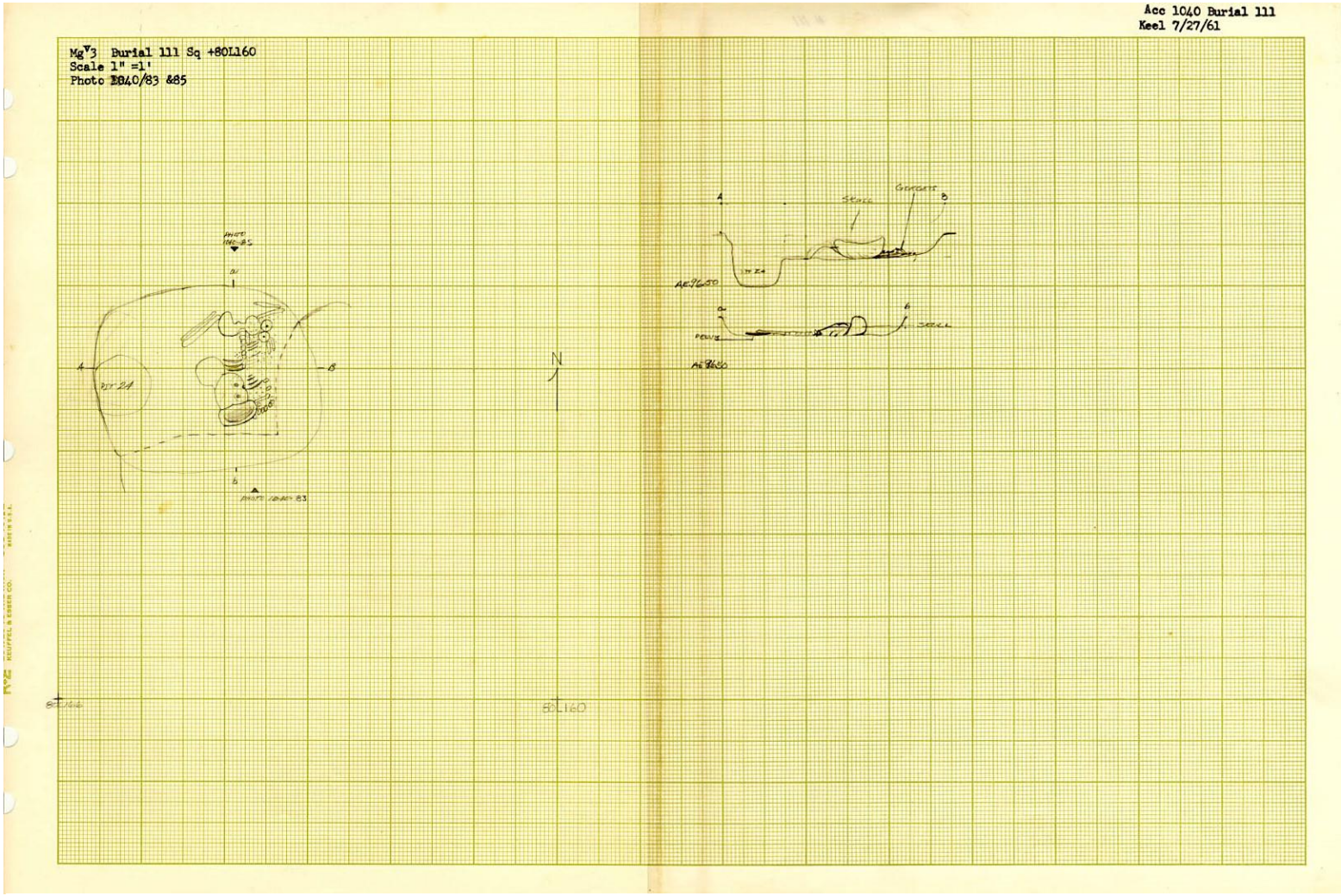

Figure A.19. Burial 111 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

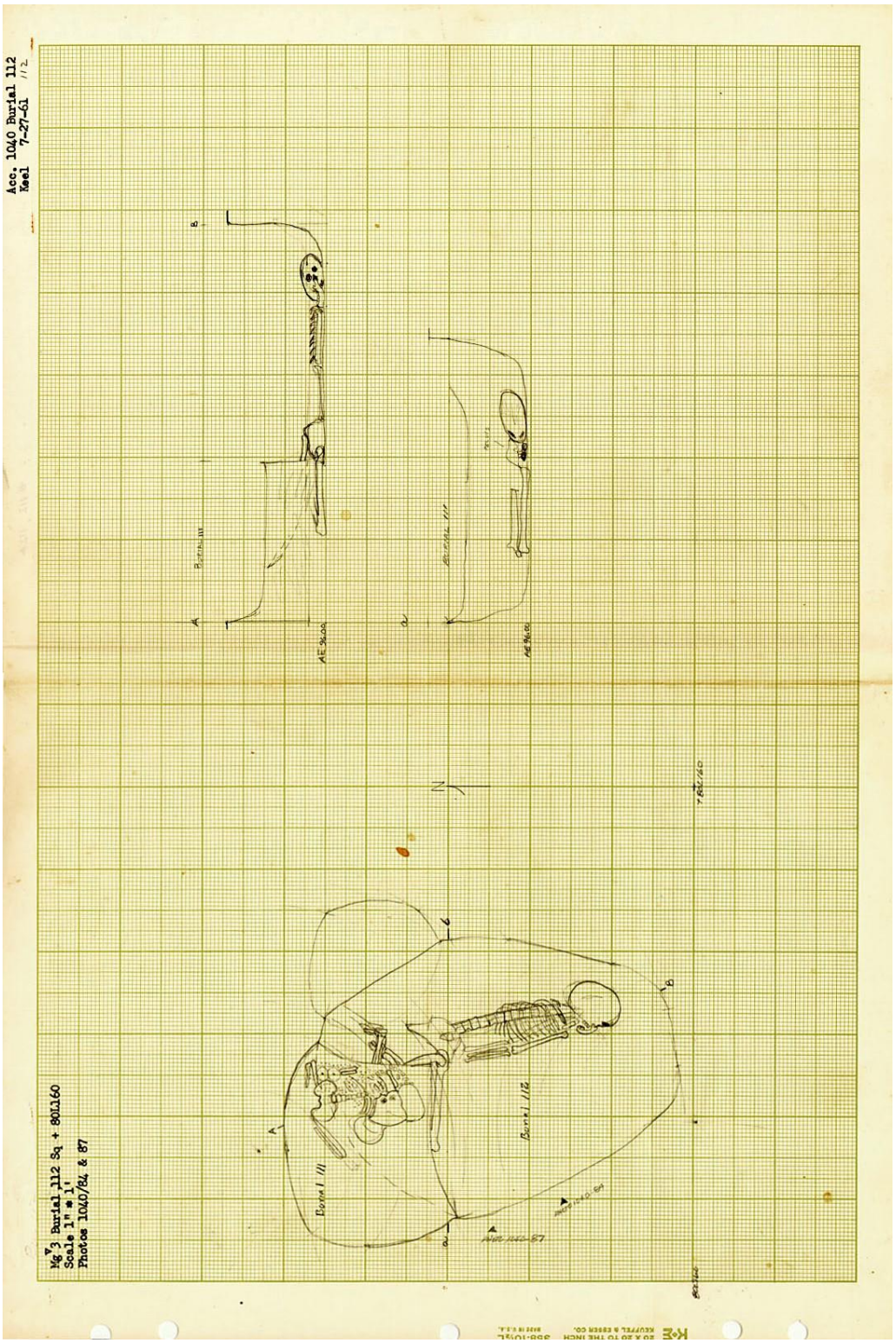

Figure A.20. Burial 112 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

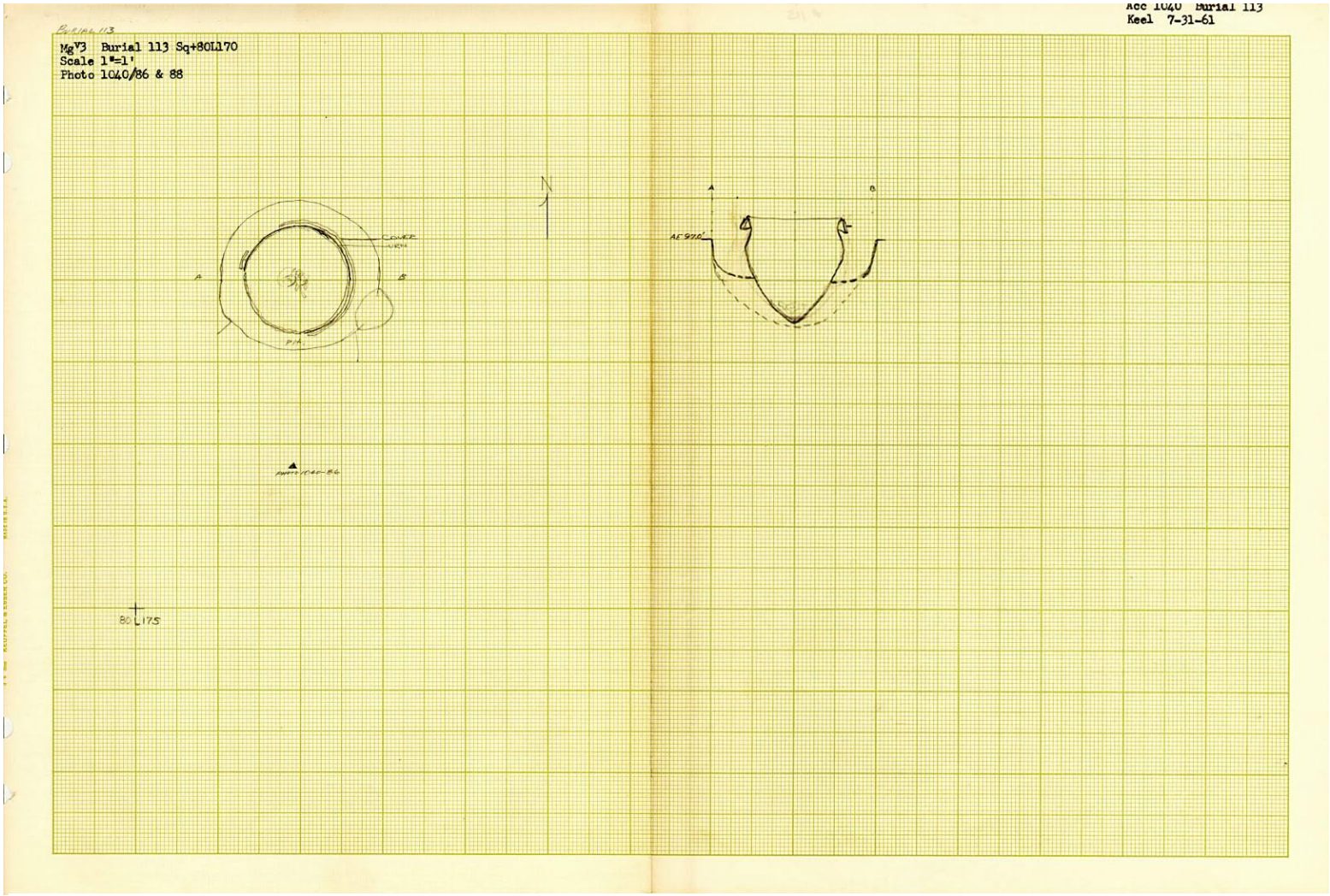

Figure A.21. Burial 113 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

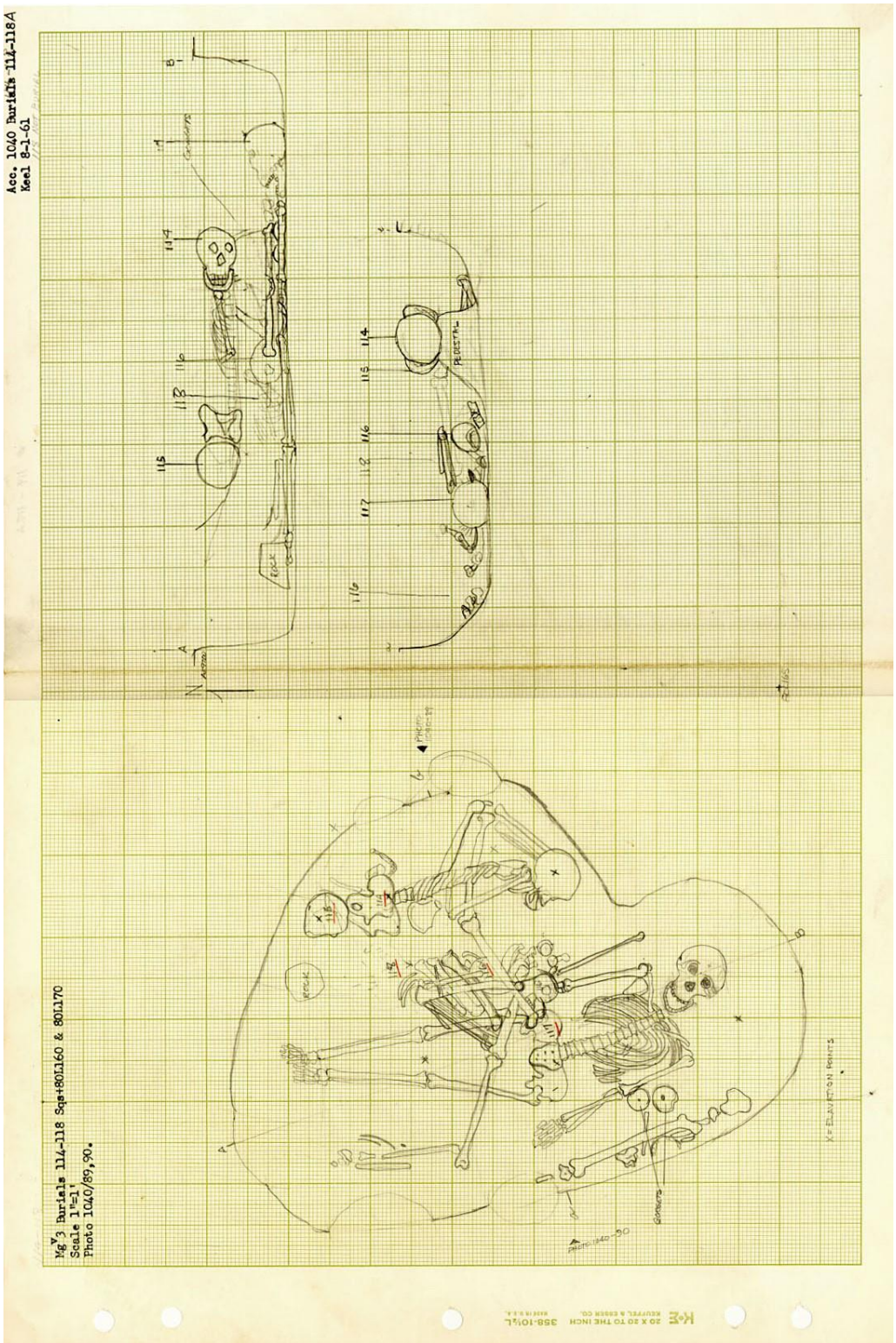

Figure A.22. Burials 114-118d (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

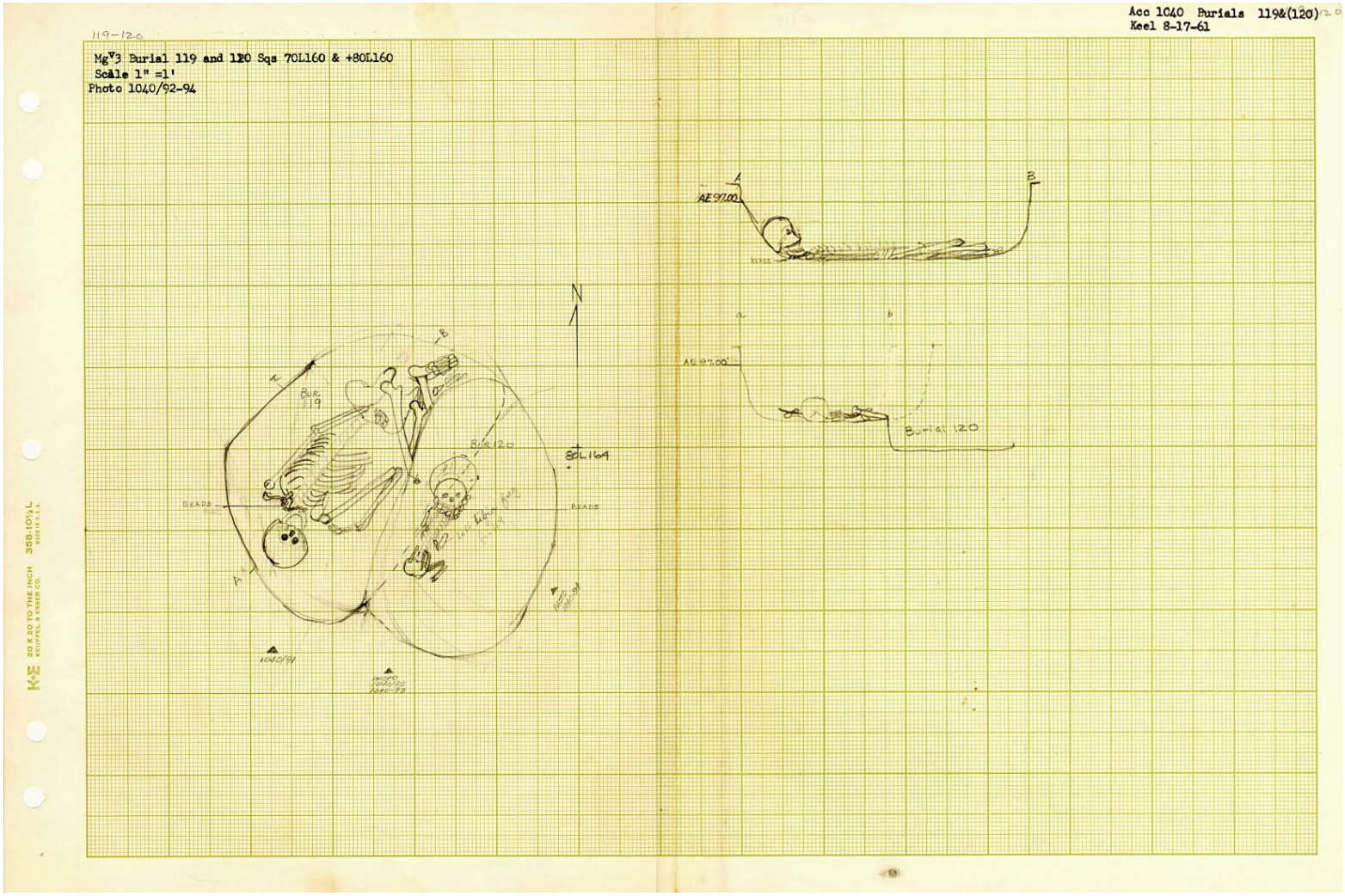

Figure A.23. Burials 119-120 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

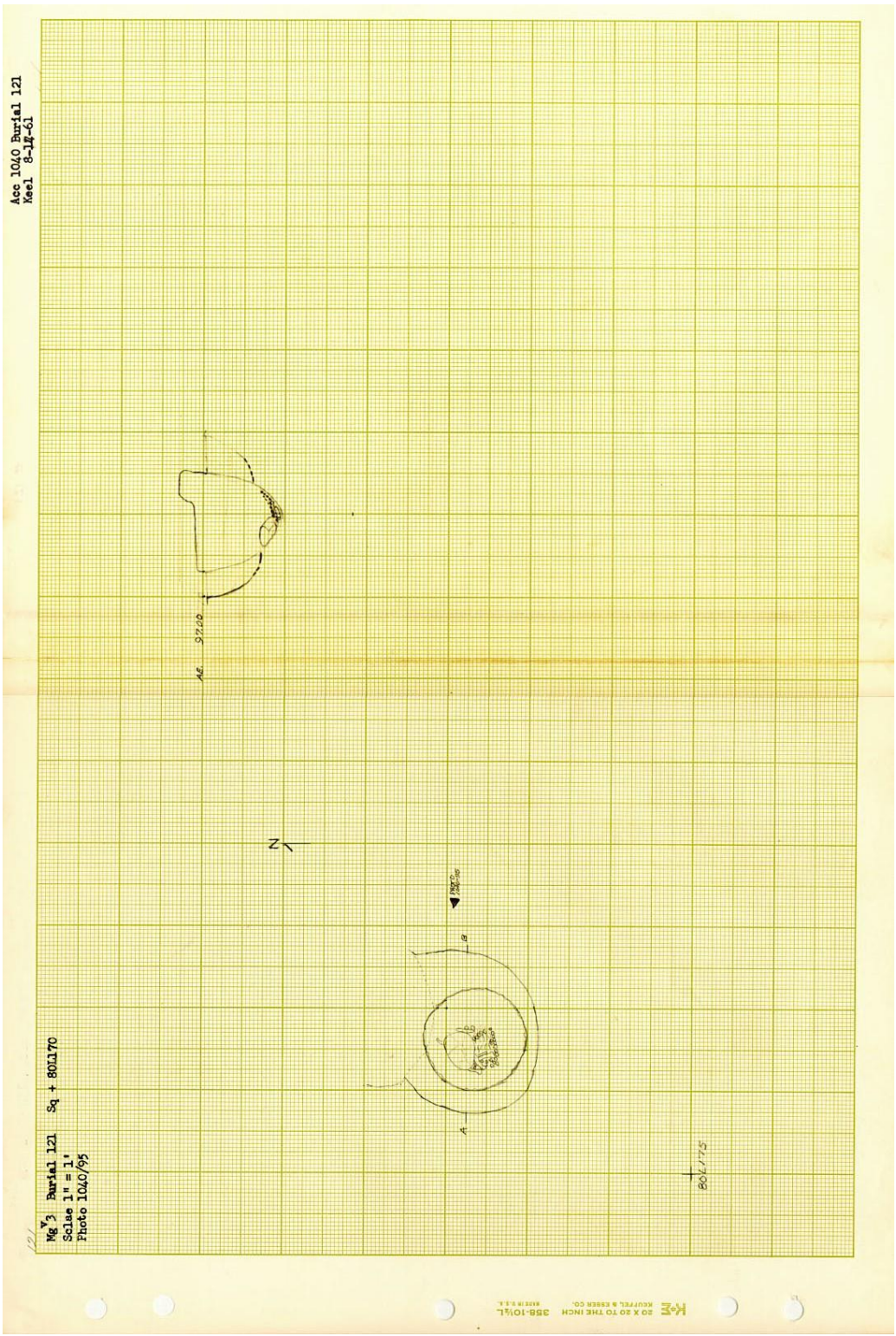

Figure A.24. Burial 121 (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

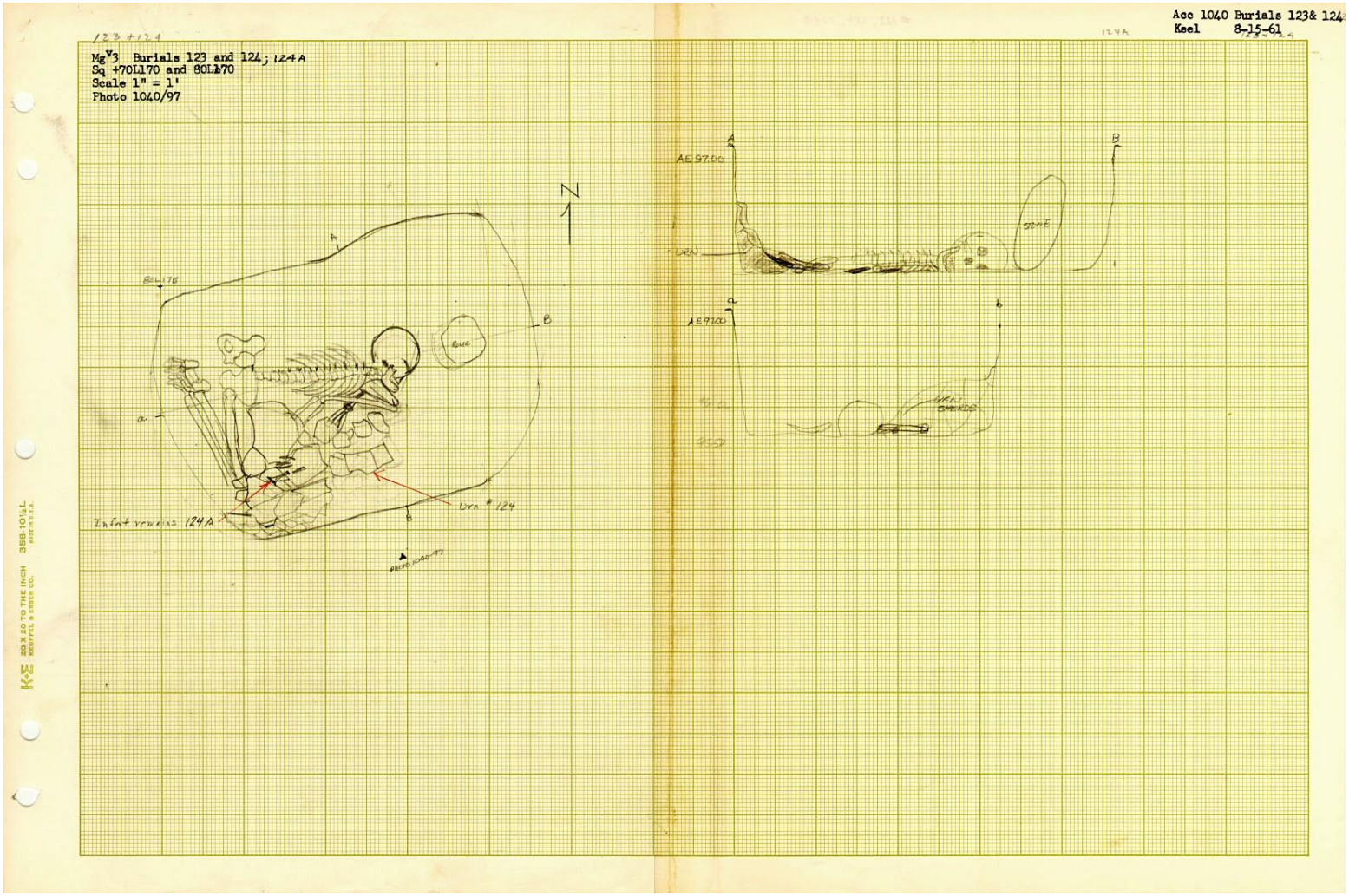

Figure A.25. Burials 123-124a (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).

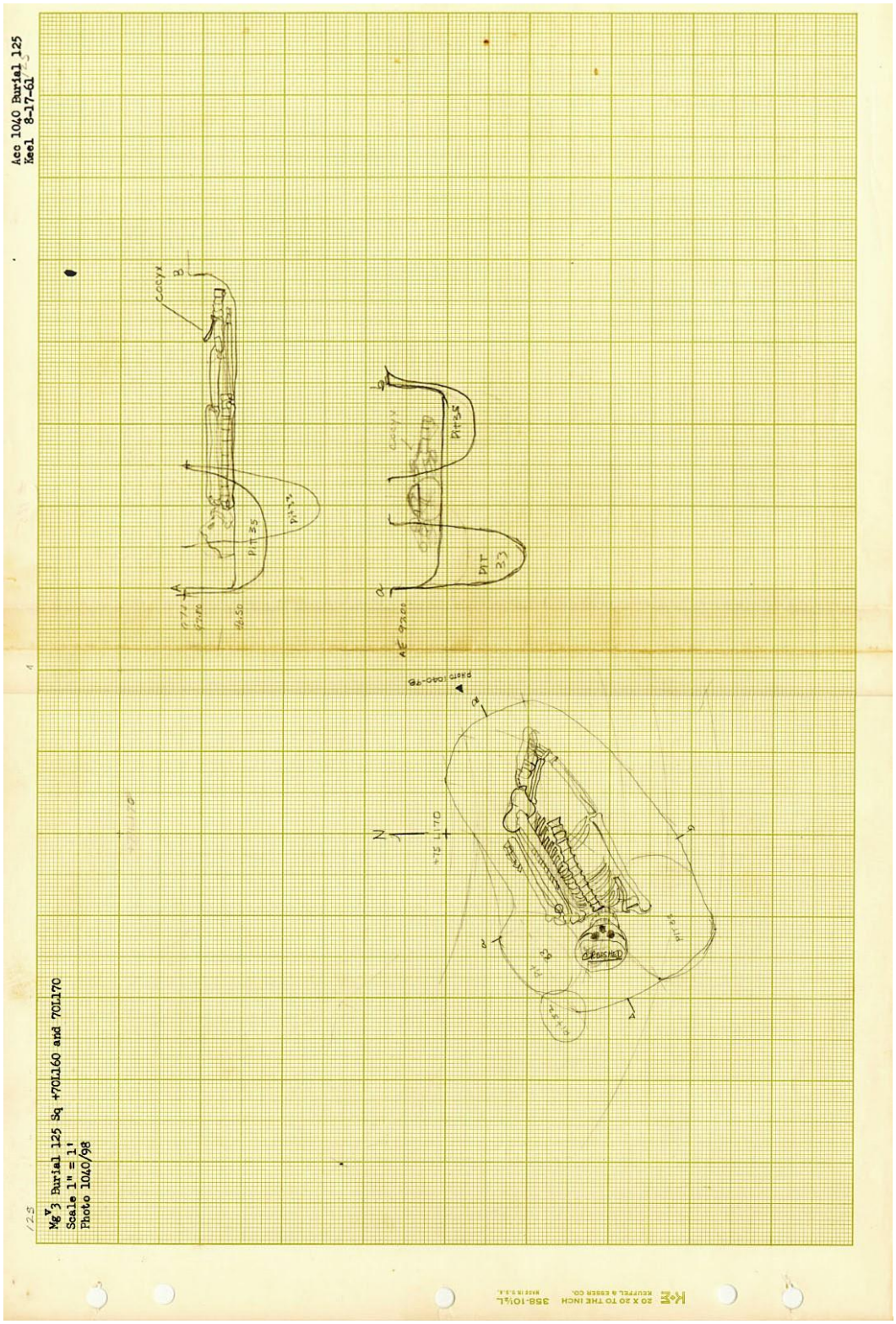

Figure A.26. Burials 125-125b (drawn by Bennie Keel, Town Creek Archives, courtesy of the RLA, UNC).